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On The Road Again

High-flying Wildcats present another formidable challenge



Brian Hill

IT CERTAINLY won't be easy, but very little has been in this uncharacteristic Nebraska season.

The road to a strong finish goes through Manhattan, Kan., where the Huskers have struggled lately. Nebraska is 13-2 at KSU Stadium but has lost in its last two visits — 40-30 in 1998 and 29-28 in 2000.

The Wildcats have prepared for the Huskers by overpowering Kansas (64-0) and Iowa State (58-7). Both margins were the largest in the history of the series.

K-State has been exceptional at converting turnovers in the back-to-back blowouts. The Wildcats have forced 13 turnovers in those two games. For the season, they have intercepted 18 passes and recovered 13 fumbles and are a plus-14 in turnover margin.

Nebraska, meanwhile, has 13 interceptions and has recovered four fumbles and has a minus-3 turnover margin.

Taking care of the football will be important, as the Huskers attempt to keep their running game rolling — it has produced an average of 351 yards the last three weeks — against a Kansas State defense that has allowed an average of 72.5 yards on the ground.

Nebraska's revitalized running game is the focus of our feature story in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*. The subject of this week's player profile is

strongside linebacker Ira Cooper, a sophomore who enjoys playing on special teams but hopes to see more action on defense.

Cooper and the other backups got a little more playing time in the 45-7 victory over Kansas. Six players scored touchdowns for Nebraska, 35 were listed on the tackle statistics, and a total of 111 Huskers saw action as the 38-point margin of victory was NU's widest since the season-opening, 48-10 win over Arizona State.

The starters enjoyed a rare early exit and the chance to watch their backups get some much-needed playing time.

"We're definitely pleased with the win and the fact that it gave us a chance to play an awful lot of players today, guys who have not seen the field much, if at all, this season," Coach Frank Solich said.

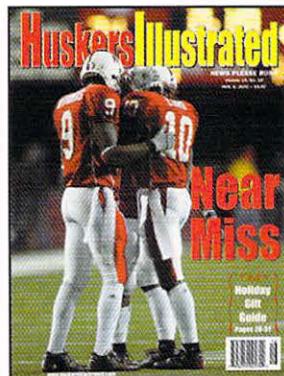
The Huskers were certainly not at the top of their game on this sunny, November afternoon — the kickoff temperature was 59

— but methodically thumped the outmanned Jayhawks and apparently suffered no new injuries heading into the Kansas State and Colorado games.

"A lot of things went well today," Solich said. "Obviously, there are things we need to do better as we go into our last two football games against Kansas State and Colorado. Those are excellent football teams that we'll be facing."

The victory made Nebraska eligible for a 34th consecutive bowl bid, but the 7-4 Huskers are certainly looking for more, according to cornerback DeJuan Groce, one of three senior captains.

"These two games are real important for the seniors," Groce said. "And I'd really like to see Coach Solich get those nine wins to keep that streak going. We just need to go out and have some more fun." ■



ON THE COVER

Nebraska I-back Dahrnan Diedrick celebrates with tight end Aaron Golliday after Golliday caught a 13-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter. Photo by Scott Bruhn

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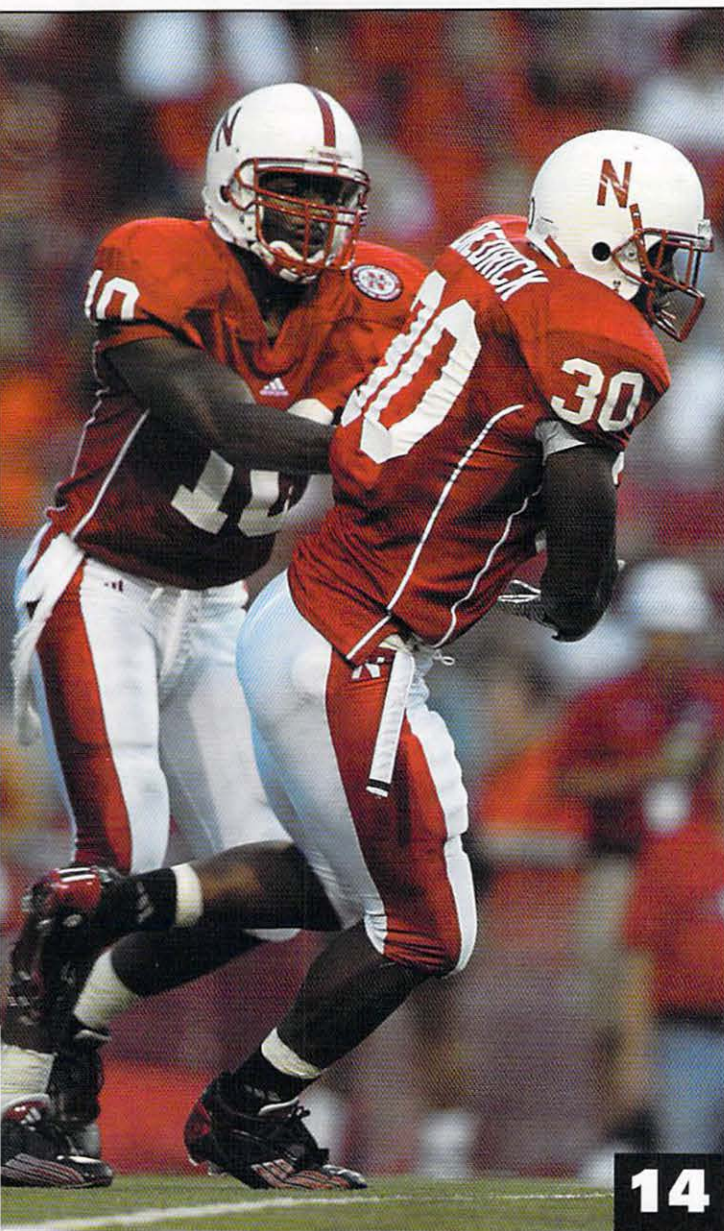
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Based on the performances against Texas A&M and Texas, Nebraska's running game certainly doesn't look outmoded. *By Mike Babcock*

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Nebraska quarterback Jammal Lord has resumed speaking to the media, saying it's "no fun," but the interaction is "part of the game." *By Mike Babcock*



Nebraska's offensive line turned in a record-setting pancake performance against Texas A&M. Contributing to the record were (from left) left tackle Richie Incognito, left guard Mike Erickson, center John Garrison, right guard Junior Tagoa'i and right tackle Dan Vili Waldrop. Tagoa'i came off the bench to replace starter Wes Cody, who was sidelined by a leg injury.

Pancake Feed

Dan Vili Waldrop felt the effects of his 24 knockdown blocks during the Cornhuskers' 38-31 victory at Texas A&M in late October. On the Sunday after the game, he was so beat up he "couldn't think straight," he said. "Everybody was like, 'Whoa, what's the matter with you?'"

Nothing was the matter. In fact, the opposite was the case. "I just got done playing one of the best games of my life," the junior offensive tackle from Wilmington, Calif., said.

Prior to the A&M game, Vili Waldrop's personal best was 17 "pancakes," in last season's game against Rice. And the most he had gotten this season was seven, twice.

"We went off, and it was really enjoyable, especially for me," he said.

He was hard-pressed to explain the rash of knockdowns, however. "I felt the same, and I felt like I was blocking the same," he said. "There had to have been something different, I don't know."

Whatever the difference, it applied to the others in the interior line as well. Vili Waldrop and his linemates broke the school single-game record with 110 knockdowns.

The previous record was 101, against Baylor in 2000.

Redshirted freshman Richie Incognito, the left tackle, led the way with 28 "pancakes," the fourth-highest total during the time the Cornhuskers have been keeping track.

Toniou Fonoti holds the single-game record, 32 against Texas Tech last season.

Center John Garrison tied his personal best with 20 knockdowns, while guards Junior Tagoa'i and Mike Erickson each finished with personal bests of 18 and 16, respectively. Tagoa'i came off the bench to replace starter Wes Cody, who was sidelined by a leg injury and couldn't return.

"Getting the 'pancake' record was pretty amazing, to know I was a part of that," said Erickson, who also was at a loss to explain the dramatic jump — the line's best total had been 70 against Missouri. "I don't know, we just knocked a lot of guys down."

The Iowa State game was the low point, with the line getting only 19 "pancakes," total. Erickson and Cody both were shut out. The other interior starters had five each.

Since then, "I moved up a lot," said Vili Waldrop. And the line overall "has gotten a lot better, (because of) confidence, technique and coaching." Coaches Milt Tenopir and Dan Young have "done a really good job with us. It's coaching and us doing it exactly the way they tell us."

A&M's defensive alignment contributed to the record. The Aggie defensive ends "lined up on Richie and me, so it kind of made it easy to cut block them," Vili Waldrop said.

"Their defense seemed to be pretty easy to go against."

Even though Incognito got the best of Linnis Smith, the 6-foot-4, 280-pound end did some trash talking, according to Vili Waldrop, "started getting a little mouthy."

When that happened, he was quick to remind Smith that "Richie just 'caked' you."

Vili Waldrop knew he had stacked a lot of "pancakes," figuring he had "around 16 or 17."

He was surprised when the coaches posted the totals, as they always do, on Monday morning. Seeing the 24 beside his name made the videotape session before practice very enjoyable.

"I was happy, smiling the whole time," said Vili Waldrop.

Wide receivers John Klem and Troy Hassebroek also had smiles on their faces during the session. Klem was credited with 15 "pancakes" while Hassebroek had 10.

"Any time you get in double figures as a wide receiver with knockdowns, you're very active," receivers coach Ron Brown said, speaking at the Extra Point Club luncheon.

The Cornhuskers were motivated by the Kyle Field mystique. "Going down to Texas A&M and people telling us, 'This is the loudest stadium on earth, home of the 12th Man and the Wrecking Crew,' I guess we stepped up to the plate and took care of business," Vili Waldrop said.

It was a record-setting "pancake" feast for the line. ■

ANOTHER HONOR FOR KELSAY

Senior rush end Chris Kelsay was among 14 college football players selected to receive post-graduate scholarships from the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame.

Kelsay was one of six NCAA Division I-A honorees. Oklahoma State offensive tackle Kyle Eaton and Texas Tech quarterback Kliff Kingsbury also received the \$18,000 scholarships.

Kelsay, who has a 3.549 cumulative grade-point average in a finance major, is the 20th Cornhusker to receive a NFF/HOF post-graduate scholarship — and the fourth under Solich.

Nebraska leads the nation in recipients. The scholar-athletes will be recognized at an awards dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City on Dec. 10.

THE SANDMAN RETURNS

Former Cornhusker outside linebacker Broderick Thomas, whose nickname was the "Sandman," provided inspiration on the Nebraska sideline during the Texas A&M victory.

The Houston native "was all over the place," said Cornhusker cornerback DeJuan Groce. "It's always a boost of confidence to have former players on the sideline to give you that extra edge."

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

The Cornhuskers met former President George H.W. Bush prior to the Texas A&M game.

The Bush Presidential Library is located in College Station, and the George Bush School of Government and Public Service is part of the university.

Surprisingly, the former president was very accessible, according to Solich. "People could just come up to him," Solich said. "He's a very open guy."

JOHNSON THE BEST

Big 12 men's basketball coaches picked Nebraska point guard Nate Johnson as the conference newcomer of the year. The 6-foot-1 junior transfer from Penn Valley, Mo., Community College averaged 26.5 points and was chosen as the NJCAA Division II player of the year last season.

Others who received consideration for the honor were Baylor's Terrance Thomas, Missouri's Ricky Clemons and Iowa State's Tim Barnes and Jackson Vroman.

The coaches picked Nebraska to finish 10th in the conference race.

Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Missouri were projected to finish in the top four spots.

Oklahoma guard Hollis Price was the coaches' pick as conference player of the year. Price was joined on the guard-heavy, pre-season all-conference team by Andre Emmett of Texas Tech, T.J. Ford of Texas, and Kirk Hinrich and Nick Collison of Kansas. All are guards except Collison.

The Nebraska women's team was picked to finish last in the conference.

CAPTAIN JAKE

Sophomore Jake Muhleisen will serve as captain of the Cornhusker men's basketball team this season. Muhleisen averaged 11.7 points and 3.8 assists as a true freshman, starting 27 of 28 games. ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

INDIVIDUALITY

Even though he followed Ahman Green from Omaha Central to Nebraska, freshman I-back David Horne wasn't interested in wearing the same No. 30 jersey that Green wore.

"I always wanted to be myself. I'm an individual," said Horne.

He would have preferred the jersey number he wore in high school, No. 9, but "it didn't work out that way," he said. Senior split end Wilson Thomas already had No. 9. So he settled for No. 5.

It had to be a single-digit number, Horne said, "style man, it looks good."

MORE HORNE

Horne has had a significant impact on the offense since shedding a redshirt. "He's an I-back that can make something out of not much," said Coach Frank Solich. "He's a guy that can create some things when he has the ball in his arms. He's got very good hands in terms of handling any kind of pitches or if he comes out in the pass route. So your comfort level with a guy of that ability is very good."

"I think he has added a lot to what we're getting done right now."

Horne has handled the pressure of playing as a true freshman well, Solich said.

Most recruits want to play right away, but Horne was "very mature," he said. "He never pressed to play this year. At one time, he felt that redshirting was going to be the best thing for him."

"In being mature and being able to handle things as he came through that phase of it, before we took him out of the redshirt, I felt very comfortable that he would accept the challenge."

GOOD SPEED

Nebraska is emphasizing speed in recruiting, and "I think we have good team speed, if you look at some of the young players that we've thrown into the mix," Solich said.

"We feel good about the talent level of the athletes that are lining up for us."

"What you do have is parity in college football and you're lining up against a lot of really good football teams and athletes. So you have to be on top of your game every time you step on the field. I think we have enough team speed to play very good football. Do we have team speed at every position that you strive to have? I don't know if I can say that. But we do have overall good team speed."



Matt Herian

HOUSEHOLD NAME

Freshman tight end Matt Herian can be "one of the great ones," receivers coach Ron Brown said at the weekly Extra Point Club luncheon on the Monday after the Texas A&M game.

"He's a guy that can definitely be a difference-maker. You can throw the ball deep to Matt because of his great speed, but he's really improving in other aspects of his game. Before it's all over, that name will be a household name, not only in Nebraska but probably across America."

WAVE OF THE FUTURE

That Herian and Horne are among five true freshmen playing for Nebraska should be no surprise. College football is seeing an irreversible youth movement.

"There's no question in my mind that's a fact," said Solich. "You're going to continue to see it year after year. There are probably not going to be many schools, if any, that will continue to line up where a percentage of those guys are not either redshirt freshmen or true freshmen."

REAL SCIENTIFIC

Solich received a 53 percent approval rate as coach in a survey of 604 Nebraskans conducted by Midwest Survey and Research. The results of the poll were reported in the Omaha World-Herald the week following the A&M game. The survey began the previous Wednesday.

Only 21 percent disapproved and 26 percent had no opinion.

Solich was asked about the results during his Tuesday teleconference. "I do the best I can, week by week," he said. "Our coaches do, our players do, and that's all we can do."

"You're never going to please everybody, so you line up day by day, do the best you can, and hopefully that turns out to be where you have great fan support. We have that."

Solich said he would go with the results of the survey.

He was sure the survey was real "scientific," he said. ■

Once One Of Them

World Series champion Erstad enjoys a special place in the Cornhusker family



Mike BABCOCK

DARIN ERSTAD'S BRIEF VISIT with the Nebraska football team, in the South Stadium's second-floor auditorium on the Friday before the Texas game, was accompanied by highlights of his kicking in high school in Jamestown, N.D. The video prompted "laughing and joking," he said.

"Why do I get made fun of every time I'm in this room?" he asked Coach Frank Solich.

"The players get no respect," he said with a smile. "But that's OK."

Actually, Erstad got considerable respect when he returned to Nebraska six days after helping the Anaheim Angels win their first World Series in their 42 years of existence.

That images of what he once was could elicit laughter, which he shared, was evidence of his special place in the Cornhusker family. He acknowledged that place minutes before the Texas game, surrounded by reporters and cameras on the sideline in the southwest corner of Memorial Stadium.

"There will be no feeling like this place," he said above the sounds of public address announcer Rick Schwieger and the blare of the Longhorns' pep band. "This is the ultimate."

"I will give our (Angels) fans a lot of credit, and I try my best not to try to compare the two, bring the football side into it because it's two different elements. But the fans were unbelievable."

One comparison he would admit was that Angel and Cornhusker fans both dress in red.

"I'm biased to the color red," he said.

Despite his success, Erstad seemed much the same as when he was a student-athlete (and he was a good student, too), down-home and courteous, accessible and modest, which might have made him just a little bit uncomfortable about the hubbub that surrounded his homecoming.

Nebraska is well represented by Erstad, who said his experiences as a Cornhusker contributed to what he has achieved. "Baseball, obviously, you grow as a player, around a bunch of great guys," he said. "You learn how to play the game. You learn how to divide your time between school and sports."

"Football, you learn how to deal with playing in front of 70,000 people, how to deal with the media, how to handle things under pressure. You look back on those times and

remind yourself of how you went through them, and it helps you with times you have to deal with them, like right now."

To describe his Cornhusker career as distinguished doesn't do it justice.

He earned All-America honors and was the Big Eight "Player of the Year" in baseball in 1995, hitting .410 with 19 home runs and 79 runs-batted-in, setting single-season records for extra-base hits and total bases. After his junior season, he was the first overall pick in the major league draft.

He also contributed to Tom Osborne's first national championship, averaging 41.2 yards as the Cornhusker punter and kicking three field goals and 10-for-10 extra points. He handled long field goals, with Tom Sieler the shorter ones, and was successful from 46 and 48 yards.

He has been an all-star twice in six big league seasons, and he was a driving force behind the Angels' World Series championship run, the player that made the Angels go, according to one sports writer. "We didn't have a most valuable player," said Erstad. "It was a most valuable team."

He hit .300 during the Series, with a home run in the Angels' dramatic comeback victory in the sixth game, and he made a pair of diving catches to keep their hopes alive.

He also made the catch for the final out in the seventh game. "I didn't even feel it hit

in my glove," he said. "The ball went up and it was very strange. I didn't take one breath."

"I remember telling myself, 'This is going to be the hardest catch I'll ever have to make.' And my dad's voice popped into my head and said, 'Use two hands,' just like when I was a little kid."

Erstad also met with the Cornhusker baseball team on the Friday before the Texas game.

"Darin's all about team, and that was his message," Coach Mike Anderson told the Lincoln Journal-Star. "What was great for me was to watch our team listen to Darin. It was incredible."

The baseball players, like the football players, realized he was once one of them.

"I knew no matter what, I'd be here for this game," Erstad said, as he was about to be introduced to a record crowd of 78,268 before the kickoff. "But it's a lot better after winning the World Series."

He would have been just as welcome if the Angels hadn't gotten there. ■



Anaheim outfielder Darin Erstad talks to members of the Nebraska baseball team.



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5/02

Speaking His Mind

Although he's only a sophomore, Bland isn't afraid to speak up



Terry DOUGLASS

JUST CALL PHILIP BLAND the E.F. Hutton of the Nebraska football team. That's because when he talks, people — or at least media covering the Cornhuskers — listen.

In just his sophomore season, the Nebraska rover has become Mr. Soundbite. He can fill up a reporter's notebook with the best of them and, during this emotionally charged up and down season, has truly become the media's go-to guy.

Unlike some players whose quotes are sought because everyone knows they're just bulletin board material waiting to happen, Bland isn't a prized interview because he shoots off his mouth. Rather, it seems reporters look to him because he's both insightful and honest.

In short, Bland is a breath of fresh air in an environment where canned and cautious responses are the norm. With his unfiltered comments after both wins and losses, Bland has helped everyone see this season through the eyes of a Husker.

He's not afraid to say that an upcoming game is "huge" or "extremely big" for the team. That's in stark contrast to the company line at Nebraska where the biggest game of the season is always the next one.

It would seem that Bland's fearlessness when it comes to speaking his mind might occasionally get him in trouble with some of his teammates or coaches. But so far, Bland said that hasn't been the case.

"A lot of times when I kind of speak my mind or answer your questions more than (some) would like me to, it's usually what I think — not in a bad way," Bland said. "It's just kind of me elaborating a little bit to give you guys something to put on your shows."

The truth is, most coaches can probably appreciate a player like Bland. His hat usually on backward and his eyes wide open, Bland handles the potentially intimidating Nebraska press conference scene with confidence — the same kind of confidence he displays on the field — as he speaks with conviction and intensity.

"Philip came in as a very confident player," secondary coach George Darlington said. "He came out of a very good high school program. He was well-coached and came from a good family, and he's an outgoing type of guy that communicates well."

"He has confidence and he has a passion for playing well and also a passion for the University of Nebraska."

While seniors Chris Kelsay and DeJuan Groce are team captains and unquestioned leaders of the defense, it would appear that Bland is following in their footsteps. He brings a high-energy approach to each and every play and his teammates love his big-hitting style.

Although he's not afraid to vocalize his feelings — on and off the field — Bland said he wouldn't classify himself as an

elder statesman of the team just yet.

"It's nice because I've been fortunate enough to have chances to play and play young, but as far as an elder goes, I wouldn't say I'm there yet," Bland said. "Each game that goes along, you get closer and closer and you try to become more and more of a leader with what you're given."

"I'm still only 19 years old. It's going to be tough for me to go out and do the things a senior could do, but yes, it's definitely a goal of mine to do things correctly as possible."

With six tackles in a 27-24 loss to Texas, Bland maintained his position as Nebraska's leading tackler through 10 games with 60 total stops, including 30 solo tackles. The 5-foot-11, 205-pounder from Lafayette, Colo., also had five tackles for loss, one interception, one fumble recovery, four pass breakups and three quarterback hurries heading into the Kansas game.

"Philip has played well all season long," defensive coordinator Craig Bohl said. "I thought he especially played well in the A&M game and the Missouri game."

Besides being good, Bland is also versatile. He has spent the entire season bouncing back and forth between the rover and free safety positions and is listed on the depth chart at each spot. Following the Texas A&M game, Bland was officially listed as the starting rover and the co-No. 1 free safety, even though he played both extensively against the Aggies.

"I'm probably actually more suited to playing rover, but it really doesn't make a big difference to me," Bland said. "I can play either one. It's just a matter of where the team needs me the most, so switching is no big deal."

In a frustrating season that has seen several streaks evaporate and others fall into major peril, Bland admits that he and his teammates aren't oblivious to the historic significance of Nebraska's off year. While it would seem that a 34th consecutive bowl bid isn't out of the question, Bland said the Huskers will be fighting hard to extend the program's remarkable string of 33 consecutive nine-win seasons.

"Man, there's so many streaks, I don't even know what to say about all our streaks," Bland said. "Just like the nine-win seasons, just like the consecutive weeks in the top 25, everyone knows about them. Shoot, we walk by them — they're up on the walls — every single day when we go up to meetings, so it's no mystery."

"It's definitely something that we're focused on."

With two regular season games to go, Bland said he'd like to think that the team could build some momentum for the stretch run.

"But nothing has come easy for us this year," Bland said. "I'm not going to lie to you, it's been tough — really tough — on us all." ■



Philip Bland was the Huskers' leading tackler through 10 games.

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island Independent. He can be reached at tdbdouglass@netzero.net.

Bigger Game

Snyder faced an enormous task in transforming the Kansas State program into a winner



Curt McKEEVER

KANSAS STATE'S 64-0 WIN against Kansas on Nov. 2 was Bill Snyder's 112th as the Wildcats' coach.

He reached that number in Manhattan, Kan., in 14 seasons — 32 fewer than it took K-State to win that many contests before his arrival.

No, K-State is no longer the K-State opposing teams loved to schedule for Homecoming.

Around Manhattan, November may be a time for quail and pheasant season. The difference now is there's a bigger game in town.

"We lived in dread of hunting season. We wouldn't have a game on the opening day of bird season," Jim Epps, a Kansas State athletic administrator for 24 years, told the Austin American-Statesman. "It would just kill us. Our attendance would be cut in half."

Not that that killed the budget.

Big 12 Commissioner Kevin Weiberg, a 1978 K-State grad, recalls watching games that barely drew 10,000, most of whom were looking for something to do while waiting for the start of basketball season.

K-State officials probably should have given Snyder, then the offensive coordinator at Iowa, some blinders when they were trying to coax him away in 1989 to become the Wildcats' 30th head football coach. The program he was about to inherit was a model for what not to do in big-time intercollegiate athletics.

Horrible facilities, lack of administrative support and tepid fan interest made for teams so bad that officials feared the school was in danger of being forced to leave the Big Eight Conference.

"The administration agreed we needed to take some risks," said Epps, a senior associate athletic director, "so in a very literal sense we went into debt — about \$3 million worth — to at least have facilities that looked like we should be a school in the Big Eight."

With Snyder, and that renewed commitment from the administration, the Wildcats made perhaps the most dramatic turnaround in college football history. The program that plays host to Nebraska on Saturday has been to nine straight bowl games.

"It's not Xs and Os," the silver-haired, 63-year-old Snyder said of the transformation. "It's all facets of your program, looking to improve every single aspect of it."

Snyder, who as an assistant to Hayden Fry had helped resuscitate an Iowa program that had endured 19 straight losing seasons, was able to get beyond the fact that the Wildcats had produced only one winning season in the previous 18 years — 6-5-1 in 1982 — and had won only three of

their last 44 games.

But there was no mistaking the enormity of the task.

"We weren't a bad football program. We were the worst in America," said former athletic director Steve Miller, who hired Snyder. "We weren't trying to be that bad, but we had somehow achieved all the goals of futility and frustration that can be achieved."

Miller, who left K-State in 1991 and is now president and CEO of the Professional Bowlers Association, interviewed 18 prospects before targeting Snyder. He was swayed by the endorsement of former Michigan Coach Bo Schembechler, who said he most hated facing Snyder's offense at Iowa.

"Bill was as plain a human being as I'd ever met in my life," said Miller. "What I mean is, he wasn't a rah-rah guy."

Besides his football knowledge, he was very detail-oriented, which was exactly what we needed. I didn't give him a chance to say no."

Snyder still needed to know he'd have backing from the K-State administration before he accepted Miller's offer.

"I don't know if there was any one thing I felt we needed to get done first," Snyder said. "In virtually every single area you can imagine, there were things where you said, 'This is what needs to take place.'"

Attracting players to a rural outpost in central Kansas was another matter.

So was building an impressive record. Both took time and were accomplished in ways that have made Snyder a target for criticism.

Snyder has relied on junior-college transfers to quickly restock the Wildcats' talent pool. Some

charge he accepts players with academic risks who can't qualify at other schools.

Critics also contend that Snyder's overall record has been fattened by playing a steady diet of cupcake opponents at home before beginning league play. In fact, No. 11 Southern Cal's visit to Manhattan this year marked the first ranked non-conference opponent to play at K-State in 14 years.

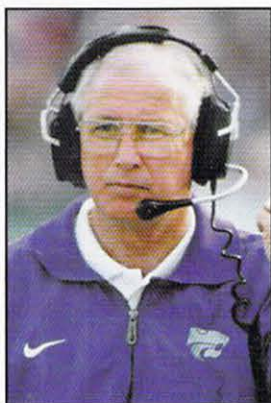
Snyder ignores the skeptics, saying the Big 12 alone is a tough-enough schedule.

Wildcat fans don't seem to mind the lack of powerful matchups.

When Snyder arrived, K-State sold about 7,000 season tickets a year. The number now is 36,000 in the 50,000-seat stadium. Another 11,000 seats are reserved for students.

Mind boggling? Epps goes one step further, saying what's occurred under Snyder is almost incomprehensible.

"We had hopes when we hired Bill, but I would never allow myself to dream this dream," he said. ■



Bill Snyder is in his 14th season as head coach at Kansas State.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Waiting His Turn

Cooper enjoys special teams, but he's ready to play a bigger role on defense

This football season hasn't turned out the way Ira Cooper expected, from a team standpoint or from an individual standpoint. And the sophomore from Omaha has been frustrated.

His own situation frustrated him early on, the first couple of games. He had expected to see action at strong-side linebacker, as Scott Shanle's back-up. But that hasn't been the case.

Cooper has played on the kicking teams, and has enjoyed all four. "But you still want to play your position," he said. "And I really haven't played defense. It's a little aggravating."

"But I know everybody has to wait their turn."

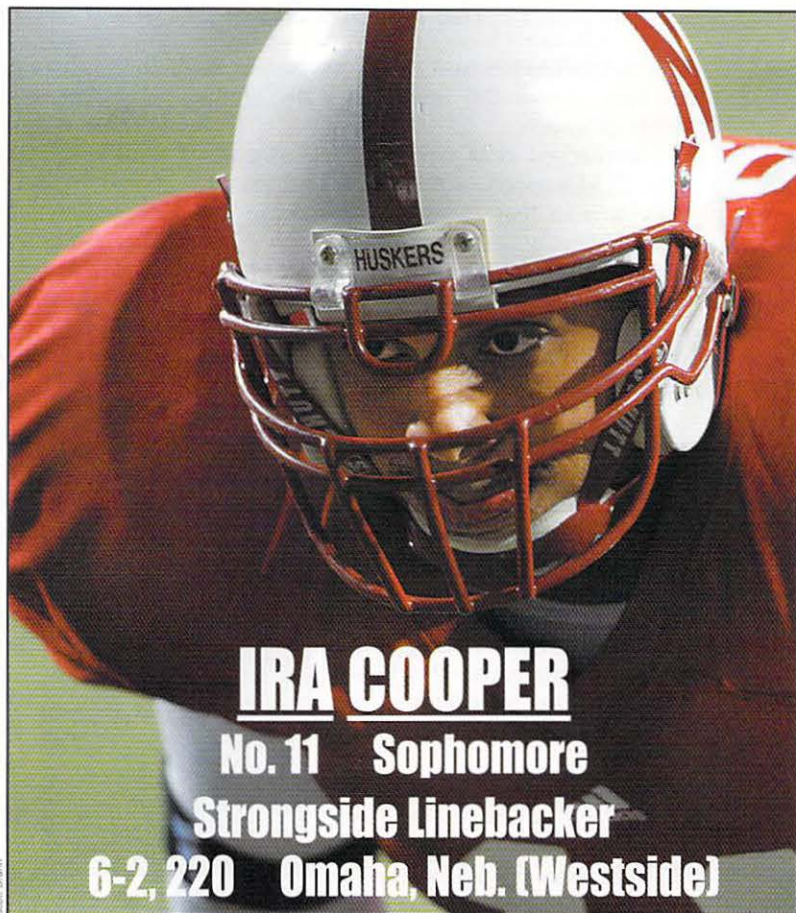
He has had to wait longer than he expected, not only because Shanle is a third-year starter but also because the strongside linebacker is replaced in some defensive packages.

Add to that the fact the Cornhuskers haven't had big leads on opponents and there simply haven't been as many opportunities as in past seasons for back-ups to play.

As a result, Cooper has had to be patient. And "I'm not a patient person," he said.

"It's been hard. The first year, I redshirt, and last year, I was on special teams. That was cool. Now this year, I wanted to see a little bit of time. But it didn't work out the way I wanted."

"So I just try to contribute on special teams and get ready for next year. I guess I'll have two years to start. I couldn't ask for too much more. So I just have to get ready for those two years."



IRA COOPER

No. 11 Sophomore

Strongside Linebacker

6-2, 220 Omaha, Neb. (Westside)

That realization, and his acceptance of it, hasn't come easily. His mood early in the season was much different than it is now. "I was just going to eat myself up about it," he said.

"I'm in a lot better mood than I was. I mean, what's the purpose of getting frustrated? It's not going to do anything. It's not my decision. The coaches made the decision and I'll just stick with it."

Cooper has had to battle nagging injuries since arriving at Nebraska from Omaha's Westside High School, where he played running back as well as linebacker. He earned all-state recognition as a running back his junior season, rushing for 1,578 yards and scoring 18 touchdowns.

He suffered from athletic pubalgia

"from way back," in part because his left hip "is all messed up," he said. He just found out recently that the hip "is out of line."

That weakened his hamstring, which contributed to the pubalgia.

"Now I know exactly what's wrong," he said.

The hamstring problem began bothering him in the summer, about a month before the start of two-a-day practices, limiting his workouts. And that "kind of set me back," he said.

With his opportunity to play in sight, Cooper has had to change his practice habits.

"I'm not a good practice player," he said. "I've picked up my practices this year, but I still catch myself being lackadaisical out there at practice. So I've tried to pick up my practices."

"I know the system. I know pretty much everything I have to do. It's just about putting yourself in place to make the play and then from there, either you make the play or not."


"I feel like I can put myself in situations to make plays."

He has worked in the weight room to maintain his strength, as everyone does. But as soon as the season is over, "I'm going to hit winter conditioning real hard," he said. In the past, "every time I'd go in the weight room and start lifting hard, start running hard, either my back or my groin started cramping up or hurting and I had to take a week off," he said. "Then I'd be scared to really push hard."

"You can be in practice and not push hard. But when you're a starter, man, you've got to push hard every single play because you're not going to be a starter if you don't. I feel that what I'm going to be doing in the off-season, I'm going to be ready to push hard on every play."

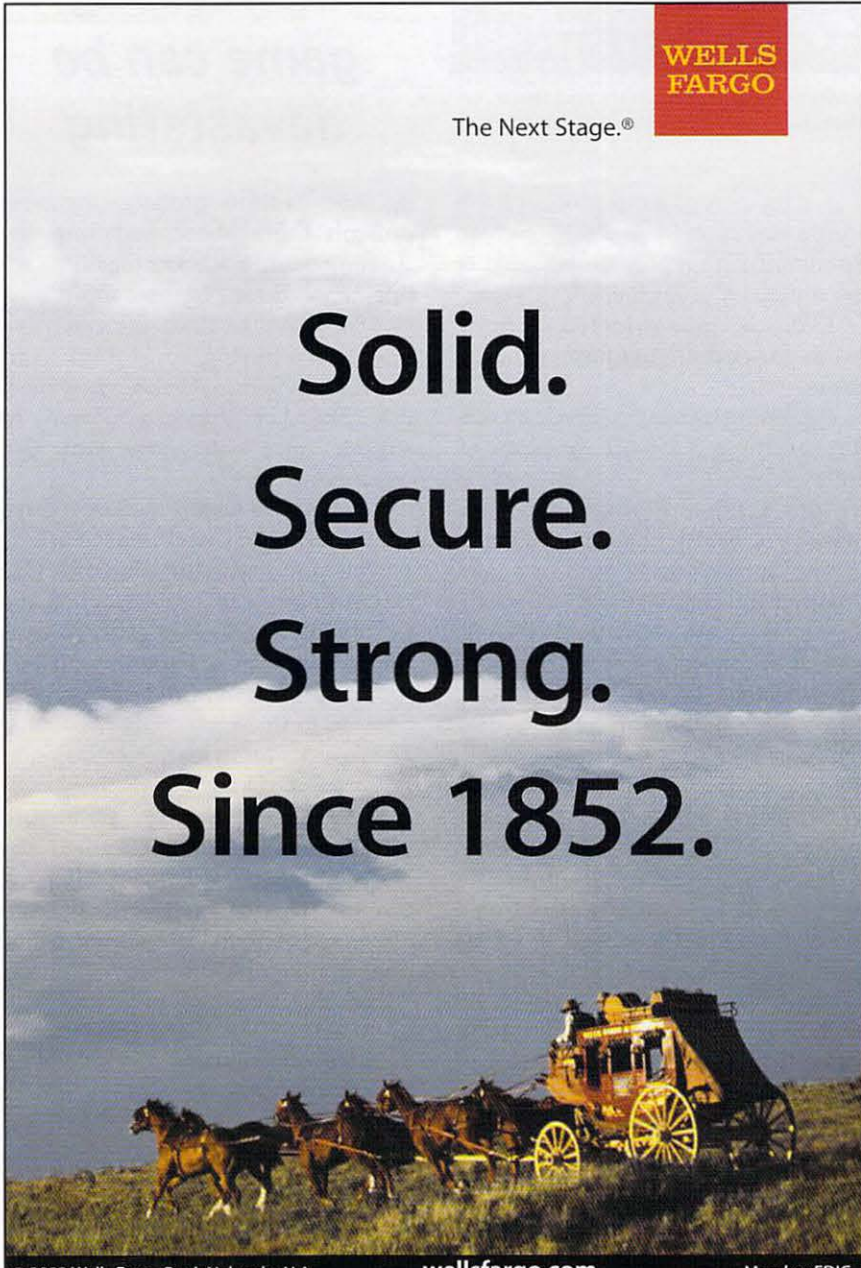
More specifically, what he's going to be doing is getting "two times faster and two times stronger." He plans to continue that hard work during spring practice and then during the summer.

"Man, it's going to be ridiculous," he said. "I'm going to give all my energy and focus into football, so when it comes my time to play, I'm going to shine." ■



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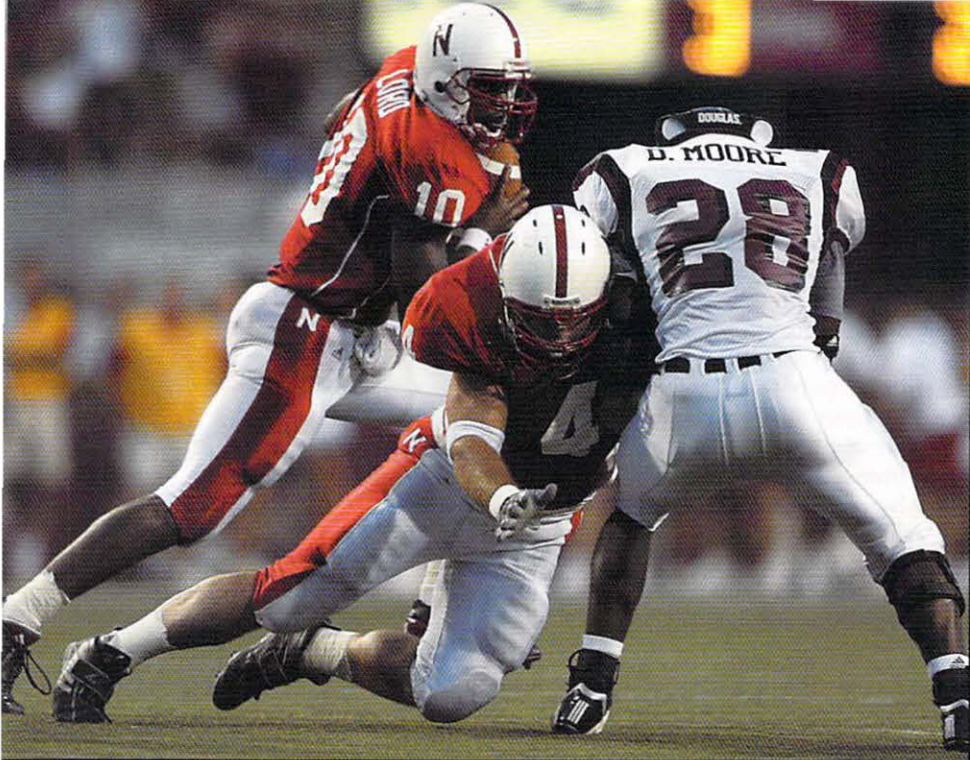
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With Jammal Lord getting more and more comfortable at the controls and the blocking and overall execution improving, Nebraska's running game is putting up the big numbers the program is known for.

Sti

*When elements
are in place,
and properly
executed,
the running
game can be
devastating*

According to conventional coaching wisdom, running teams have problems coming from behind. But Nebraska did at Texas A&M, rallying for a 17-point, third-quarter deficit to win, 38-31.

The Cornhuskers gained 144 yards in a 17-point fourth quarter, including 114 on the ground. Based on that performance, "I don't think anyone would say the running game was outmoded," running backs coach Dave Gillespie said early the next week, as Nebraska prepared to play Texas.

No one could have said it was outmoded after the Texas game, either, as the Cornhuskers covered 60 yards in four plays, three of them runs, to cut the deficit to three points with 2:34 remaining.

Nebraska rushed for 320 yards against the Longhorns, who had problems dealing with the option and containing Jammal Lord, who ran for 234 yards, a school record for a quarterback.

When the elements are in place, and properly executed, the running game can be devastating.

"I think there are very few football coaches in America that wouldn't want to have a great running game," said Gillespie. "If they could have

one or the other, I think most of them would say they'd want to have a dominant running game because of the options it gives them."

Even a pass-oriented offense needs a complementary running game.

A passing game "certainly makes for exciting football at times," Gillespie said.

"But I think it does limit you, makes you pretty one-dimensional."

The same could be said of a run-oriented offense. Without some balance in the form of efficient passing, it can be ineffective. But if an offense lacks balance, better that it can run. "If people can run the football, they can be successful, definitely," said defensive coordinator Craig Bohl.

Obviously, Gillespie and Bohl are going to be biased toward Nebraska's offensive philosophy. But the Cornhuskers' emphasis on rushing has served them well over the past 22 seasons.

Nebraska has earned 13 of its 15 NCAA Division I-A rushing titles since 1980, and has finished lower than third only three times during that span — fourth in 1996 and 1999 and sixth in 1998.

The Cornhuskers' rushing average hasn't dropped below 253.8 yards per game since 1977.

A successful rushing attack begins

up front. "I think probably the most difficult thing about installing the running game is having the offensive linemen to do it," Gillespie said.

"You have to have the offensive line. That's the big key, I think. And we've been fortunate enough to have that. Then, obviously, you want to support that with guys who can make plays."

And Nebraska has had such guys at quarterback as well as at I-back.

The importance of the line was evident early this season, when the Cornhuskers struggled offensively at times behind an inexperienced line. As the line has matured, the production has jumped.

There's a lot to learn, according to senior center John Garrison, a two-year starter. "Some guys are able to pick it up, I wouldn't say immediately but fairly soon," he said. "It's one of those deals where it's the personality, one of those individual deals, how fast they pick it up."

He was recruited as a rush end but was moved to center and played as a true freshman, deep snapping. "It wasn't until the spring of my sophomore year, and actually into my junior season, that things really started to click," said Garrison. "It's a different process for everybody."

If he was going to move to the offensive line, his mentality was bet-

Going



Senior center John Garrison (52) and sophomore left guard Mike Erickson (78) say that run blocking is tougher than pass blocking, but they still enjoy it more.

ter suited to run blocking than pass blocking. "Looking back on it, not knowing, if I could see myself fitting anywhere in an offensive scheme, an option style, run style, I think was a pretty good fit for me," he said.

"I always thought that being a good run blocker would be harder than being a pass blocker because you think of pass blocking as being more of a passive type deal, sitting back and waiting for the guy to come to you. They present their own challenges, in their own right.

"But to defend myself and the rest of us, I think it's tougher to be a run

blocker."

That sophomore offensive guard Mike Erickson would agree isn't surprising.

"I love being here because it's primarily running," Erickson said. Run blocking "is a lot more fun. You get more opportunities to knock guys down than you do on pass pro."

In addition to linemen, a run-oriented offense probably requires more time to install. But the rewards can be greater. "I think what occurs in today's game is that some people want a quick fix, and the running game takes more time," said Bohl.

"But if a team is patient and works hard, a running game allows an offense to control the football, to keep the defense completely off balance.

"Without question, it takes more time, and you've got to be more disciplined, (with) more fundamentals. Passing, that's a quick fix. You basically spread the field out, whereas when you run, you've really got to be diligent, I think, and in that respect, patient."

A running game also can exact a physical toll on the defense.

"To me, there's nothing more



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demoralizing as a football coach or a football player, I would think, than to have the ball just run down your throat and not be able to stop it," Gillespie said.

As the late Woody Hayes used to say, when a team throws the football, three things can happen and two of them are bad. A pass can fall incomplete or be intercepted. Against a passing attack, "you have a chance for a guy to overthrow the ball or drop the ball or get beat on a pass rush," said Gillespie. "But when somebody is cranking it right at you and you can't stop them, it's a helpless feeling."

Nebraska's defensive philosophy, like that of most teams, is to make opponents one-dimensional, and like most teams, the Cornhuskers try to do that by stopping the run.

"Very rarely do you say, 'We're going to make them one-dimensional, stop the pass.' We want to make them throw because then you can become more aggressive," Bohl said.

According to conventional coaching wisdom, that's when a defense is at its best. ■

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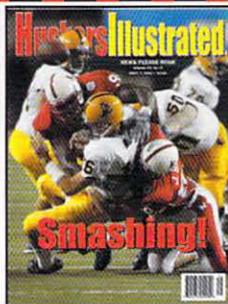
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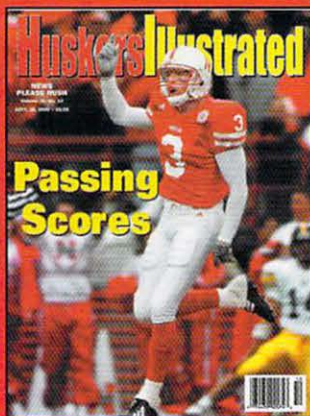
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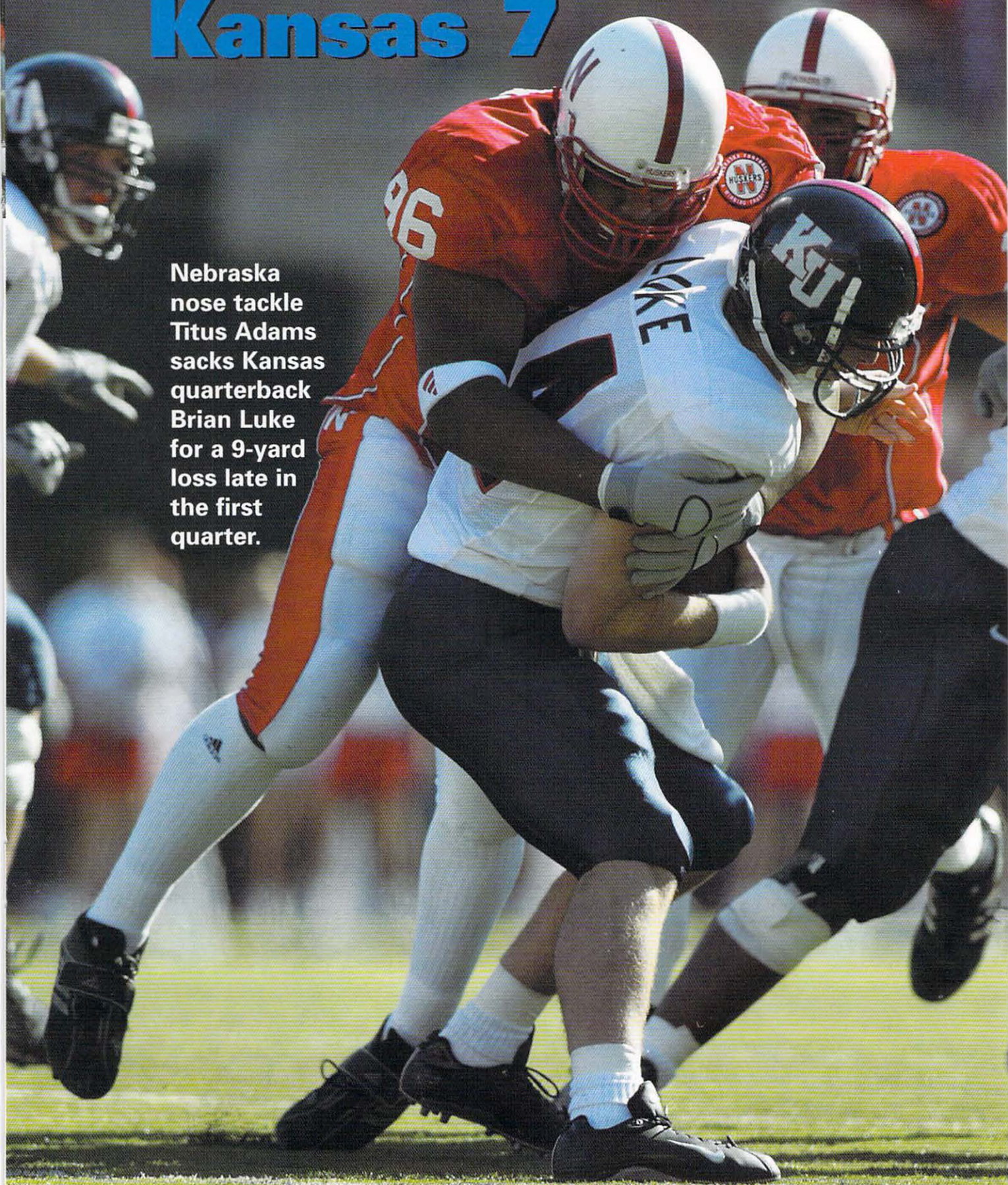
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Kansas 7

Nebraska
nose tackle
Titus Adams
sacks Kansas
quarterback
Brian Luke
for a 9-yard
loss late in
the first
quarter.



Starters Have Fun Watching

*Commanding lead gives Solich
chance to rest regulars; 111
Huskers see action in 45-7 romp*

BY MIKE BABCOCK

PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN

Mike Erickson couldn't have been accused of disrespecting the Kansas football team. Even after he had come out of the game for good, a couple of series into the third quarter, Nebraska's sophomore offensive guard kept his pads on, "just in case we had to go back in," he said.

Still, with a 31-point lead, "we kind of had an idea we might be done," he said. By the fourth quarter, he and the other starters were able to relax and enjoy the Cornhuskers' 45-7 victory.

"It was a nice day, so you could sit there and cheer on everybody else," said Erickson.

Senior I-back Dahrran Diedrick never lost his enthusiasm, even on the sideline.

"I was clapping and screaming at them, telling them to do good," he said.

"Them" was a reference to Nebraska's lower-unit players, many of whom had seen little or no action this season. Coach Frank Solich used 111 players in all, including five I-backs, five quarterbacks and eight fullbacks, according to the participation chart. "My friends were in there," Diedrick said.

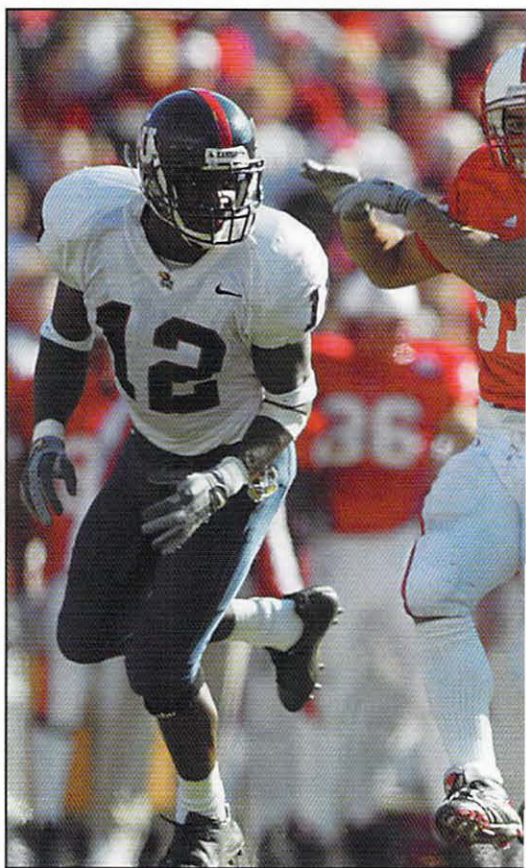
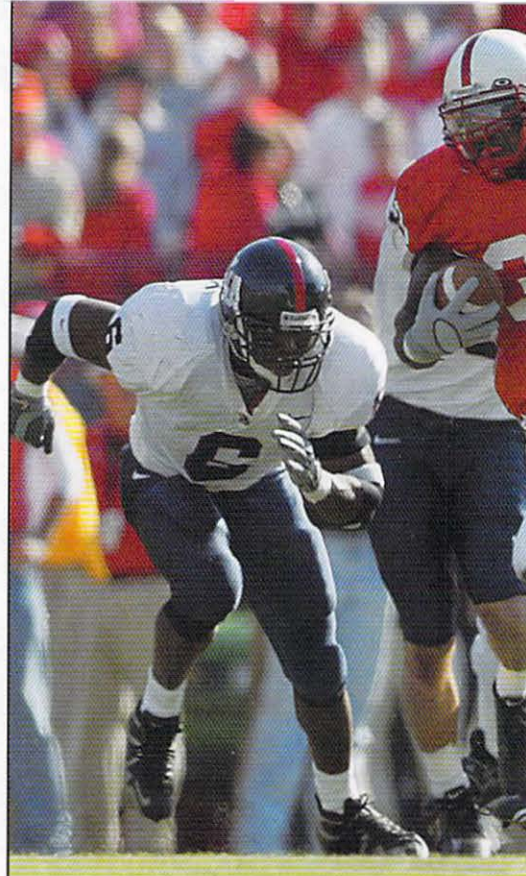
"I was just so happy for them to get it done."

That seeming cast of thousands got it done, despite what might have been a less than inspired effort against a Kansas team that probably stretched the definition of hapless.

After emotional games against Texas A&M and Texas, "at times, we played a little tired," said Solich. "I just felt that maybe we weren't quite as crisp, quite as sharp."

"There are those times when you have to battle through a little fatigue."

If so, fatigue was a more formidable foe than the Jayhawks, who were



helpless against a Nebraska running attack that produced a pair of 100-yard rushers and averaged 6.3 yards per carry, factoring in 2.2 yards per carry in the fourth quarter, after



Nebraska I-backs Dahrran Diedrick and David Horne both finished with more than 100 yards rushing against Kansas. They also scored the Huskers' first two touchdowns. Diedrick (top left) broke loose for a 53-yard touchdown run to cap Nebraska's opening drive, and Horne (bottom left) scored on a 30-yard run midway through the first quarter.

Kansas State last November.

Diedrick was well over halfway to 100 after his fourth carry, a 53-yard touchdown run up the middle of the field. The counter-trap was so open that "I turned around after blocking and watched him run," Erickson said. "That hole, man, you could drive a truck through there."

Horne also had the look of a sport utility vehicle, gaining 30 yards on his first carry, 30 yards on his second carry — for a touchdown — and 25 yards on his fourth carry, all during the first quarter.

"The offensive line has been opening up just holes, not only for me but the I-backs as well," said quarterback Jammal Lord, who was limited to 74 yards on 13 carries. "All the praise, all the glory, give it to the offensive line. We're just in the right place at the right time to make the plays."

Not every aspect of the Cornhusker offense pleased Solich, however. "We'll have to throw the ball and have a better passing game than what maybe we displayed today," he said.

Lord threw touchdown passes of 27 yards to split end Wilson Thomas and 12 yards to tight end Aaron Golliday but finished just 4-for-10 for 59 yards, with one deflected interception.

The other quarterbacks were a combined 1-of-5 passing, for 3 yards.

Defensively, "I thought we got stronger as the game went on," Solich said.

Kansas responded to Nebraska's first touchdown with a 50-yard touchdown pass from Jonas Weatherbie to Byron Gasaway. But the Jayhawks couldn't establish a running threat, a fact reflected in their anemic passing totals: 10-of-31 for 153 yards, with two interceptions.

With No. 1 quarterback Bill Whittemore sidelined by injury, back-ups Weatherbie and Brian Luke shared time, putting Kansas "behind the eight-ball a little bit," said Solich.

Solich had begun substituting liberally.

True freshman David Horne rushed for 122 yards on nine carries, and Diedrick ran for 107 yards on 12

carries — his first 100-yard rushing performance of the season.

"It finally came," said Diedrick. "It took a long time."

He rushed for 108 yards against



Nebraska made things difficult for Kansas most of the afternoon. NU rush end Justin Smith (above) deflects a Brian Luke pass in the fourth quarter, and rover Aaron Terpening (right) returns a blocked punt 30 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter. The punt was blocked by Lannie Hopkins.

Weatherbie left the game with a first-quarter injury, and scout team quarterback Greg Heaggans, a wide receiver, even took some snaps after Luke was shaken up early in the second quarter.

The touchdown pass was "disappointing," Cornhusker defensive coordinator Craig Bohl said. "But we're really pleased how they responded. Did that play stir us up? I don't believe so."

The defense was stirred up from the beginning, he said.

He wouldn't divulge Nebraska's defensive goals.

"We had an agreement to keep those goals private," he said.

That didn't prevent a reporter from asking if the defense had come close to achieving its goals.

"We had a good day," was all that Bohl would say.

It was a good day for just about everyone on the Nebraska sideline, as player after player was sent into the game. "I think it's good," said Erickson. "Everybody puts in their time. Everybody has gone through winter conditioning, summer lifting and summer conditioning.

"It's good to see them get playing time."

Sophomore Jake Andersen and redshirted freshman Brandon Koch got opportunities to play at guard after Erickson, Wes Cody and Junior Tagoa'i, the other regulars, were finished.

"We cheered those guys on," Erickson said. "We were hoping we could get 400 yards rushing. We were telling them we needed 50 more yards, seeing if they could get it done."

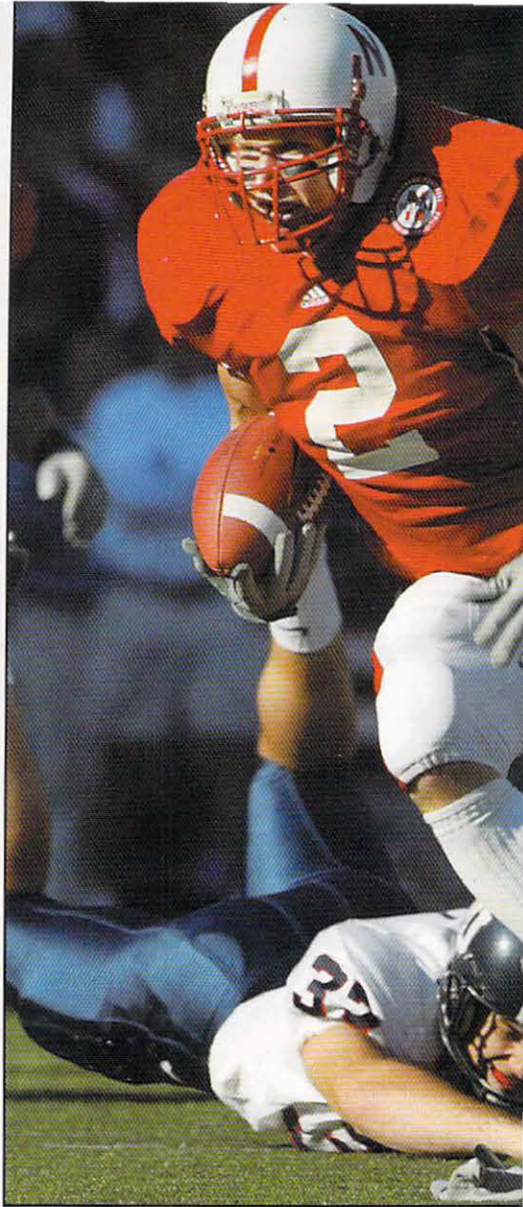
Nebraska finished with 352 yards rushing, only 26 in the fourth quarter.

Andersen was particularly demonstrative in his enthusiasm during the Cornhuskers' "Tunnel Walk" prior to the game. "Jake, he gets fired up pretty good," said Erickson.

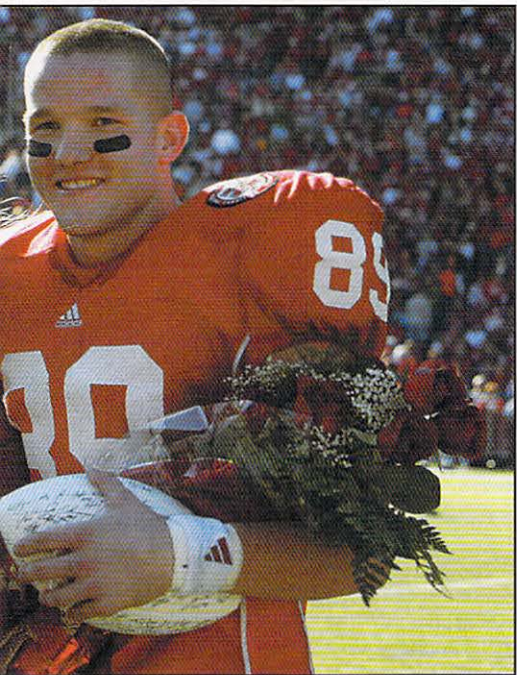
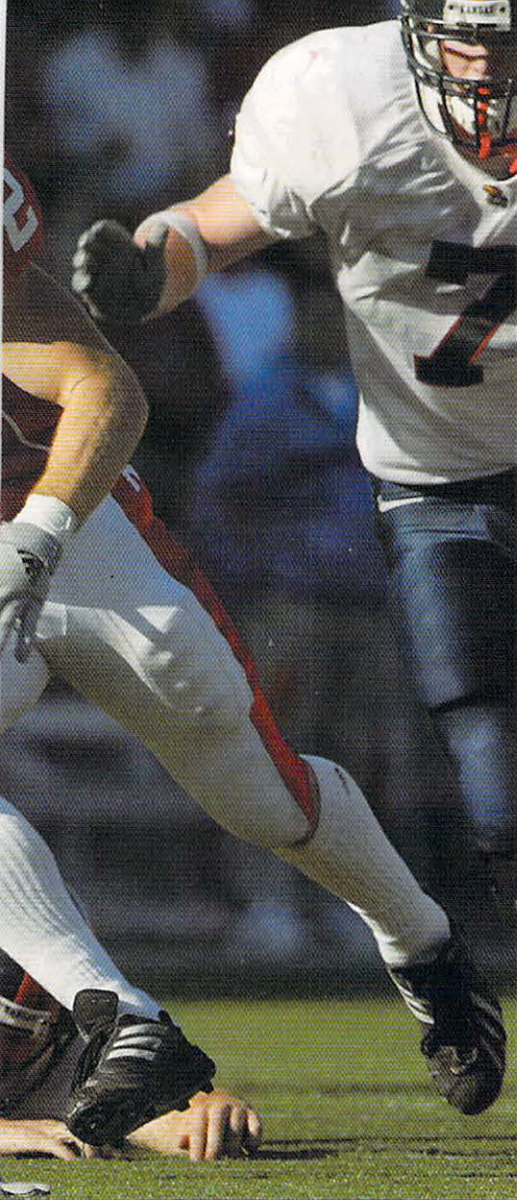
Perhaps Andersen anticipated what was going to happen.

"This is the earliest I've been out," Erickson said. "It's fun."

"It hasn't been that way at all this season," said Diedrick. "I can't think of one game where we had an opportunity to play this many guys. I get an opportunity to play every game. Sometimes you take it for granted. A lot of guys work really hard, just to get them a chance is a great thing." ■



Senior wingback Troy Hassebroek was named Honorary King of Arlington, Neb., and the queen.



becoming king during halftime festivities. Jill

4TH & 1NCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Kansas Game

KING HASSEBROEK

Wingback Troy Hassebroek, a senior from Lincoln, was crowned Nebraska's Homecoming King at halftime. Coach Frank Solich allowed Hassebroek to participate in the ceremony.

If he were going to miss something during halftime, "you would have missed him as Homecoming King out there," said Solich. "We would have kept him in (the locker room). But really going in, we had indicated to him that we could put him out on the field.

"The bottom line is, he was deserving of being out there."

Hassebroek was the first football player to be named Homecoming King since kings were first selected in 1975. "It's nice for him to be awarded Homecoming King," Solich said.

"I really feel good for Troy because he has earned everything that has come toward him."

For the record, Jill Kruger from Arlington, Neb., was chosen Homecoming Queen.

DOUBLE 1,000

Jammal Lord became just the 18th quarterback in NCAA Division I-A history to rush and pass for 1,000 yards in a season, joining former Cornhuskers Scott Frost (1997) and Eric Crouch (2001) on the list. Lord reached 1,000 yards rushing against Texas. He completed 4-of-10 passes for 59 yards against Kansas to reach 1,000 yards passing. He now has rushed for 1,229 yards and passed for 1,016 yards.

Lord's rushing yardage ranks 11th all-time at Nebraska. His 2,245 total offense yards this season rank fifth on the Cornhuskers' all-time list. Crouch was previously fifth on that list.

BOWL BOUND

With its seventh victory, the Cornhuskers become eligible for a bowl bid for a 34th consecutive season. That's a "major plus," said Solich. "It means an awful lot."

A representative from the Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La., was on hand.

After the 24-21 loss at Oklahoma State, there was concern that Nebraska might not get seven victories. "There was a time when you could have pointed some fingers, and no one did," Solich said, adding that the players remained unified and continued to work hard during practice.

"A lot of that great effort is showing now."

PUNT PROBLEM

Nebraska's Lannie Hopkins blocked two Kansas punts. The first was a partial block and led to a 26-yard punt. The second, on the Jayhawks' first possession of the second half, was picked up by the Cornhuskers' Aaron Terpening and returned 30 yards for a touchdown.

"We work hard on special teams throughout the week, and it showed today," said Hopkins. "I just found a crease on a couple (of punts) and was able to get to the punter. It's nice to get the two blocked punts, but I want to just do whatever I can to help the team."

Nebraska punter Kyle Larson fared much better than his Kansas counterpart, Curtis Ansel. Larson averaged 50.2 yards on six punts, pinning the Jayhawks inside their own 20 twice.

AT LAST, 100

I-back Dahrran Diedrick rushed for 107 yards and one touchdown. It was his first 100-yard rushing performance of the season and moved him to ninth on the Cornhuskers' career-rushing list, passing Roger Craig, Rick Berns, Dan Alexander, Keith Jones and Correll Buckhalter.

Senior center John Garrison was pleased with Diedrick's success. "I found out Dahrran was out for the game and the first thing I did was go over and ask if he got 100 yards," Garrison said. "It's been somewhat disappointing to him in terms of reaching 100 yards this year, so it's good to see that."

Diedrick credited Garrison and the rest of the offensive line for his success.

"I don't feel anything special about it," he said. "I just think it feels regular. I'm glad it happened, and I'll try to let it happen next week and every other game we play."

Diedrick now has 2,543 rushing yards for his career.

True freshman David Horne led Nebraska's ball carriers with 122 yards on only nine carries, an average of 13.6 yards per carry. Horne has 556 yards for the season, the fifth-highest total for a Cornhusker freshman. ■

2002 Schedule

1	Aug. 24	Arizona State (7-4), W 48-10	1-0
2	Aug. 31	Troy State (4-7), W 31-16	2-0
3	Sept. 7	Utah State (3-6), W 44-13	3-0
4	Sept. 14	@ Penn State (7-3), L 40-7	3-1
5	Sept. 28	@ Iowa State (7-4), L 36-14	3-2
6	Oct. 5	McNeese St. (8-1), W 38-14	4-2
7	Oct. 12	Missouri (4-6), W 24-13	5-2
8	Oct. 19	@ Oklahoma St. (4-5), L 24-21	5-3
9	Oct. 26	@ Texas A&M (6-4), W 38-31	6-3
10	Nov. 2	Texas (9-1), L 27-24	6-4
11	Nov. 9	Kansas (2-9), 12:30 p.m.	7-4
12	Nov. 16	@ Kansas State (8-2), TBA	
13	Nov. 29	Colorado (7-3), 2:30 p.m., ABC	

Big 12 at a Glance

North			
Team	Conf.	All	
Colorado	5 1	7 3	
Kansas State	4 2	8 2	
Iowa State	4 3	7 4	
Nebraska	3 3	7 4	
Missouri	1 5	4 6	
Kansas	0 7	2 9	
South			
Team	Conf.	All	
Texas	5 1	9 1	
Oklahoma	4 1	8 1	
Texas Tech	4 2	7 4	
Texas A&M	3 3	6 4	
Oklahoma State	2 3	4 5	
Baylor	1 5	3 7	

Saturday, Nov. 9

Nebraska 45, Kansas 7
 Kansas State 58, Iowa State 7
 Colorado 42, Missouri 35, ot
 Texas 41, Baylor 0
 Texas A&M 30, Oklahoma 26
 Texas Tech 49, Oklahoma State 24

Saturday, Nov. 16

Nebraska at Kansas State
 Iowa State at Colorado
 Missouri at Texas A&M
 Oklahoma State at Kansas
 Texas at Texas Tech
 Oklahoma at Baylor

Upcoming Opponents' Schedules

Kansas State (8-2)	
Aug. 31	Western Kentucky, W 48-3
Sept. 7	Louisiana-Monroe, W 68-0
Sept. 14	Eastern Illinois, W 63-13
Sept. 21	Southern Cal, W 27-20
Oct. 5	@ Colorado, L 35-31
Oct. 12	Oklahoma State, W 44-9
Oct. 19	Texas, L 17-14
Oct. 26	@ Baylor, W 44-10
Nov. 2	@ Kansas, W 64-0
Nov. 9	Iowa State, W 58-7
Nov. 16	Nebraska
Nov. 23	@ Missouri

Colorado (7-3)

Aug. 31	Colorado State, L 19-14
Sept. 7	San Diego State, W 34-14
Sept. 14	USC, L 40-3
Sept. 21	@ UCLA, W 31-17
Oct. 5	Kansas State, W 35-31
Oct. 12	@ Kansas, W 53-29
Oct. 19	Baylor, W 34-0
Oct. 26	Texas Tech, W 37-13
Nov. 2	@ Oklahoma, L 27-11
Nov. 9	@ Missouri, W 42-35, ot
Nov. 16	Iowa State
Nov. 29	@ Nebraska

Game 12

At Kansas State Nov. 16

Location: Manhattan, Kan.

Enrollment: 22,369

2002 record: 8-2

Coach: Bill Snyder, 14th year

Series: Nebraska leads 72-12-2



Time, TV TBA

KSU Stadium, Manhattan, Kan.

Wildcat to Watch

Senior cornerback Terence Newman is one of the nation's most



versatile players. He has scored on a kickoff return, a punt return, a pass reception and a defensive extra-point this season. Newman is one of 14 semi-finalists for the

Jim Thorpe Award, presented to the nation's top college defensive back. He has four interceptions and 11 pass breakups.

Quick Facts

Kansas State has won its last two games by the largest margins in the history of the series. The Wildcats defeated Kansas 64-0 and Iowa State 58-7.

Kansas State forced six Iowa State turnovers, giving it 19 takeaways (12 interceptions and seven fumble recoveries) in the last five weeks.

Sophomore running back Darren Sproles had 18 carries for 103 yards vs. Iowa State to become the fastest Wildcat to 1,000 yards in a season. He reached the 1,000 yards on his 159th carry. Sproles recorded his sixth consecutive 100-yard rushing game, tying him with Isaac Jackson (1973) for the school record for consecutive 100-yard rushing games.

On Deck

Colorado Nov. 29

Location: Boulder, Colo.

Enrollment: 26,597

2002 record: 7-3

Coach: Gary Barnett, 4th season

Series: Nebraska leads 43-15-2

2:30 p.m. (CST), ABC
 Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.



Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	9	Wilson Thomas***	6-6	215	Sr.
	2	Ross Pilkington	6-0	195	Fr.
LT	51	Richie Incognito	6-3	295	RFr.
	69	Nick Piovendo	6-3	300	So.
LG	78	Mike Erickson*	6-4	295	So.
	55	Junior Tagoa'i*	6-2	295	Jr.
C	52	John Garrison***	6-4	290	Sr.
	79	Josh Sewell	6-2	300	Jr.
RG	59	Wes Cody**	6-2	305	Sr.
	55	Junior Tagoa'i*	6-2	295	Jr.
RT	68	Dan Vili Weldrop**	6-5	315	Jr.
	69	Nick Piovendo	6-3	300	So.
TE	99	Aaron Golliday***	6-4	290	Sr.
	84	Jon Bowling***	6-3	240	Sr.
QB	10	Jammal Lord**	6-2	210	Jr.
	16	Mike Stuntz*	6-1	200	So.
FB	4	Judd Davies**	6-0	255	Jr.
	45	Steve Kriewald*	5-10	255	So.
IB	30	Dahran Diedrick***	6-0	225	Sr.
	5	David Horne	6-0	190	Fr.
WB	89	Troy Hassebrook***	6-4	215	Sr.
	81	Ben Cornelsen**	5-10	190	Sr.
PK	26	Josh Brown***	6-2	190	Sr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

LR	57	Chris Kelsay***	6-5	255	Sr.
	88	Trevor Johnson**	6-4	250	Jr.
NT	59	Ryon Bingham*	6-3	280	Jr.
	55	Jon Clanton***	6-2	285	Sr.
DT	94	Patrick Kabongo**	6-6	305	Jr.
	66	Le Kevin Smith	6-2	300	RFr.
RR	98	Demoin Adams***	6-2	260	Sr.
	88	Trevor Johnson**	6-4	250	Jr.
SLB	43	Scott Shanley***	6-2	240	Sr.
	47	Ira Cooper*	6-2	220	So.
MLB	38	Barrett Ruud*	6-2	240	So.
	54	Chad Sievers	6-3	225	So.
WLB	7	Demorris Williams	6-1	205	Jr.
	17	T.J. Hollowell**	6-0	220	Jr.
LCB	3	Fabian Washington	6-0	175	Fr.
	28	Pat Ricketts**	5-11	180	Jr.
FS	20	Josh Bullocks	6-1	195	RFr.
	21	Phillip Bland*	5-11	205	So.
ROV21	2	Phillip Bland*	5-11	205	So.
	2	Aaron Terpening***	5-11	195	Sr.
RCB	5	DeJuan Groce***	5-10	190	Sr.
	1	Lornell McPherson*	5-9	175	So.
P	19	Kyle Larson	6-0	195	Jr.

Kansas State OFFENSE

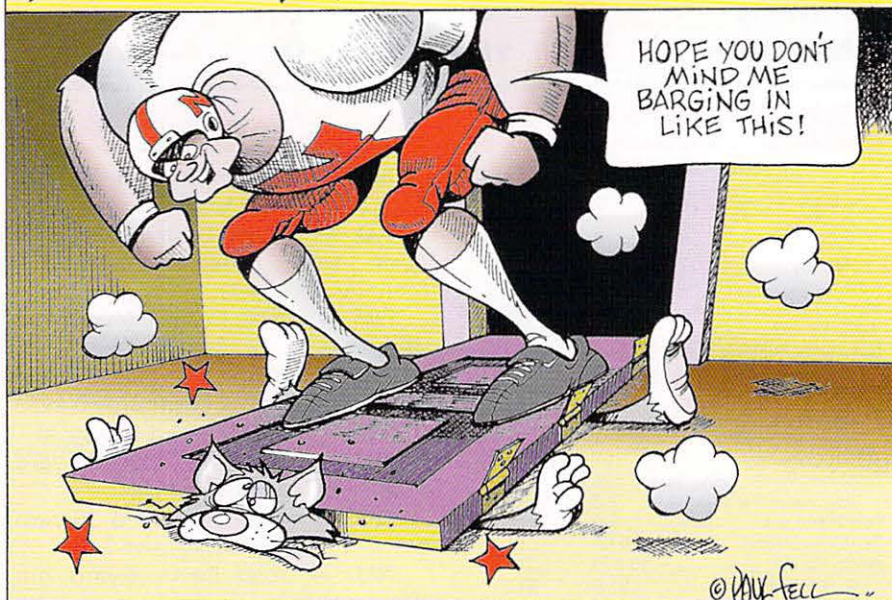
WR	8	Taco Wallace	6-1	190	Sr.
	15	Davin Dennis	6-1	175	Fr.
LT	65	Thomas Barnett***	6-5	290	Sr.
	66	Jeromey Clary	6-7	290	Fr.
LG	53	Greg Lackey**	6-4	285	Jr.
	64	Ryan Lila	6-3	300	Jr.
C	78	Steve Washington***	6-4	315	Sr.
	67	J. Keaulana-Kamakea	6-3	270	Jr.
RG	60	Mike Johnson	6-4	280	So.
	73	Ben Rettele*	6-7	305	Jr.
RT	55	Billy Miller*	6-6	275	Sr.
	75	Drallinn Burks*	6-4	305	Sr.
TE	88	Thomas Hill*	6-5	260	Jr.
	80	Travon Magee	6-7	265	Jr.
QB	3	El Roberson**	6-1	205	Jr.
	5	Marc Dunn*	6-4	205	Sr.
RB	43	Darren Spores*	5-7	170	So.
	6	Daniel Davis	6-0	215	Jr.
FB	44	Travis Wilson	6-4	240	Jr.
	42	Victor Mann	6-2	230	Fr.
WR	82	James Terry	6-5	180	Jr.
	9	Derrick Evans	5-11	175	Jr.
K	15	Joe Rheem*	6-2	210	So.

Kansas State DEFENSE

LE	98	Andrew Shull**	6-5	260	Jr.
	94	Thomas Houchin*	6-3	260	Jr.
DT	30	Tank Reese*	5-11	280	Sr.
	76	Eric Everley**	6-6	300	Sr.
NT	62	Corey White*	6-3	285	Sr.
	92	Justin Montgomery*	6-2	281	Jr.
RE	90	Henry Bryant*	6-1	255	Sr.
	97	Melvin Williams***	6-3	270	Sr.
LB	18	Bryan Hickman*	6-3	220	Jr.
	51	Andy Klocke***	6-2	220	Sr.
LB	56	Terry Pierce**	6-3	250	Jr.
	59	Matt Butler	6-2	220	Fr.
LB	7	Josh Buhl**	6-0	210	Jr.
	57	Maurice Thurmond*	6-2	215	So.
CB	9	Randy Jordan	6-2	175	Jr.
	33	James Dunnigan*	5-8	180	Sr.
FS	1	Bobby Walker*	6-1	195	Sr.
	23	Jesse Tetuan	6-0	185	Fr.
SS	2	Rashad Washington**	6-3	210	Jr.
	31	Marcus Patton	6-1	210	So.
CB	4	Terence Newman***	5-11	185	Sr.
	5	Jerry McCloud	5-9	170	Sr.
P	10	Travis Brown***	6-4	215	Sr.

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NEBRASKA vs. KANSAS STATE



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PICKS

NEBRASKA

AT KANSAS STATE

Brian Hill Editor

Kansas State has scored 122 points the last two weeks, taking advantage of turnovers by Kansas and Iowa State. The Wildcat defense is tough, but Nebraska has been able to run against everyone lately. The Huskers are due to win in Manhattan, and if they can win the turnover battle and continue their fine special teams play, they will. **Nebraska 20, Kansas State 19**

Mike Babcock Contributing Editor

Now that the Cornhuskers don't have to deal with a road jinx, their only concern should be a very good Kansas State

team. Still, there's the matter of being 0-2 in Manhattan under Coach Frank Solich. But if they can get their running game cranked up again, they will break that pattern. **Nebraska 23, Kansas State 21**

Terry Douglass Grand Island Independent Sports Editor

Now that Nebraska has the road monkey off its back with a dramatic comeback victory at Texas A&M, the Huskers truly believe they can win away from home. NU hasn't won at Kansas State since 1996 but has displayed the ability to play with anyone. **Nebraska 27, Kansas State 21**

BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs. Kansas

Nov. 9, 2002 • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

Score By Quarters

Kansas	7	0	0	0	—	7
Nebraska	14	10	21	0	—	45

Team Stats

	KU	NU
First Downs	12	19
Rushing	5	14
Passing	6	3
Penalty	1	2
Rushing Attempts	36	56
Yards Gained Rushing	111	390
Yards Lost Rushing	40	38
Net Yards Rushing	71	352
Net Yards Passing	153	62
Passes Attempted	31	15
Passes Completed	10	5
Had Intercepted	2	1
Total Plays	67	71
Total Net Yards	224	414
Avg. Gain Per Play	3.3	5.8
Fumbles-Lost	6-1	2-0
Penalties-Yards	6-54	7-60
Punts-Yards	10-379	6-301
Avg. Per Punt	37.9	50.2
Punt Returns-Yards	2-7	8-116
Interceptions-Yards	1-4	2-34
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	0-0
Kickoff Returns-Yards	4-58	1-15
Possession Time	28:40	31:20

Scoring

NU — Dahrran Diedrick 53-yard run (Josh Brown kick)

KU — Byron Gasaway 50-yard pass from Jonas Weatherbie (Johnny Beck kick)

NU — David Horne 30-yard run (Brown kick)

NU — Wilson Thomas 27-yard pass from Jammal Lord (Brown kick)

NU — Brown 27-yard field goal

NU — Aaron Golliday 12-yard pass from Lord (Brown kick)

NU — Aaron Terpening 30-yard blocked punt return (Brown kick)

NU — Josh Davis 4-yard run (Brown kick)

Att. — 77,351

Weather — sunny

Temp. — 59

Individual Statistics

KANSAS

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Green, C.	15	47	3.1	9	0
Weatherbie, J.	2	16	8.0	12	0
Heagans, G.	8	11	1.4	8	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Luke, B.	7-22-2	31.8	79	0
Weatherbie, J.	3-9-0	33.3	74	1

RECEIVING LEADERS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Gasaway, B.	4	79	19.8	50	1
Green, C.	3	41	13.7	24	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Ansel, C.	8	349	43.6	52

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Johnson, R.	2	7	3.5	5	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Heagans, G.	3	49	16.3	19	0

DEFENSE LEADERS

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Cole, G.	8	1	9	2-10	0	0
McCoy, J.	5	4	9	0	0	0
Reid, N.	4	4	8	2-21	0	2-21

NEBRASKA

RUSHING

Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Horne, D.	9	122	13.6	30	1
Diedrick, D.	12	107	8.9	53	1
Lord, J.	13	74	5.7	42	0
Davis, J.	8	29	3.6	12	1
Ross, C.	5	17	3.4	13	0
Simmons, M.	4	13	3.3	8	0
Giesselmann, Z.	1	1	1.0	1	0
LeFlore, M.	1	-5	-5.0	0	0
Stuntz, M.	3	-6	-2.0	5	0

PASSING

Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	4-10-1	40.0	59	2
Stuntz, M.	1-3-0	33.3	3	0
Diedrick, D.	0-1-0	0.0	0	0

Chrisman, J. 0-1-0 0.0 0 0

RECEIVING

Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Thomas, W.	2	40	20.0	27	1
Golliday, A.	1	12	12.0	12	1
Davis, J.	1	7	7.0	7	0
LeFlore, M.	1	3	3.0	3	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	6	3-1	50.2	58

PUNT RETURNS

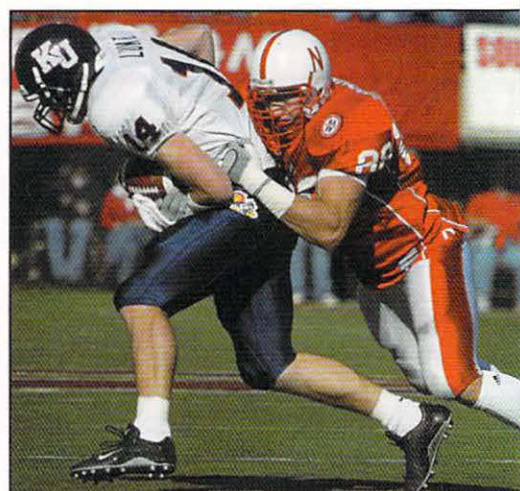
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	5	61	12.2	24	0
Ross, C.	1	25	25.0	25	0
Terpening, A.	1	30	30.0	30	1
Cornelsen, B.	1	0	0.0	0	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	1	15	15.0	15	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Smith, J.	2	5	7	1-1	0	0
Johnson, T.	5	1	6	1-2	0	0
Sievers, C.	3	1	4	0	0	0
Clanton, J.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Siegel, S.	1	3	4	1-1	0	0
Williams, D.	2	1	3	1-1	0	0
Smith, L.	1	2	3	1-2	0	0
Bullocks, J.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Butler, T.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Hassebroek, T.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Buller, C.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Shanley, S.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Ricketts, P.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Bland, P.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Adams, T.	1	1	2	1-9	0	1-9
Burgess, R.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Washington, F.	0	2	2	0	1-0	0
Ruud, B.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hollowell, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Adams, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Groce, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Burrow, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Kabongo, P.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Bullocks, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Pippens, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Tiedtke, B.	0	1	1	0	0	0
McPherson, L.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Bingham, R.	0	1	1	0	0	0
O'Shea, M.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Vili Waldrop, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Grixby, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
White, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Toline, T.	0	1	1	0	0	0



Nebraska rush end Trevor Johnson stops Kansas quarterback Brian Luke.

2002 SEASON STATS

RUSHING LEADERS

Name	G	Att.	Yds.	YPG	TD
Lord, J.	11	192	1,229	111.7	7
Diedrick, D.	11	146	729	66.3	6
Horne, D.	6	96	556	92.7	7
Ross, C.	11	35	184	16.7	2
Davis, J.	10	23	151	15.1	1
Davies, J.	11	29	106	9.6	4
LeFlore, M.	9	4	80	8.9	1
Simmons, M.	10	13	56	5.6	0
Collins, T.	3	14	39	13.0	0
Kriewald, S.	11	6	19	1.7	0

PASSING LEADERS

Name	G	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Lord, J.	11	73-146-9	50.0	1,016	10
Stuntz, M.	6	10-25-0	40.0	100	0

RECEIVING LEADERS

Name	G	No.	Yds.	YPC	YPR	TD
Thomas, W.	11	25	278	11.1	25.3	3
Pilkington, R.	11	13	277	21.3	25.2	1
Davis, J.	10	8	56	7.0	5.6	0
Cornelsen, B.	11	6	81	13.5	7.4	0
Hassebroek, T.	11	5	54	10.8	4.9	1
Ross, C.	11	5	39	7.8	3.5	0
Bowling, J.	10	4	86	21.5	8.6	1
LeFlore, M.	9	4	17	4.2	1.9	0
Herian, M.	9	3	137	45.7	15.2	2
Golliday, A.	10	3	29	9.7	2.9	2
Diedrick, D.	11	3	16	5.3	1.5	0

FIELD GOALS

Name	G	Att.	Good	Long
Brown, J.	11	12	9	48

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Larson, K.	52	2,274	43.7	71

PUNT RETURN LEADER

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Groce, D.	30	586	19.5	89	3

KICKOFF RETURN LEADER

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Davis, J.	27	632	23.4	46	0

DEFENSIVE LEADERS

Name	G	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	S/Yds.
Bland, P.	11	31	31	62	5-13	1-0	0
Williams, D.	11	27	35	62	3-17	0	1-15
Ruud, B.	11	26	34	60	9-31	0	2-17
Shanley, S.	11	25	32	57	4-14	0	1-10
Ricketts, P.	11	30	22	52	1-4	2-5	0
Kabongo, P.	10	9	38	47	9-25	0	2-17
Groce, D.	11	31	16	47	2-3	4-26	0
Hollowell, T.	11	16	29	45	2-6	0	1-5
Bingham, R.	11	12	32	44	7-16	0	1.5-9

TEAM STATISTICS

	NU	OPP
Total Offensive Yards	4,300	3,820
Plays	762	791
Average Per Play	5.6	4.8
Average Per Game	390.9	347.3
Net Rushing Yards	3,184	1,333
Attempts	586	407
TDs Rushing	28	14
Net Passing Yards	1,116	2,487
Completions	83	190
Average Per Pass	6.3	6.5
Average Per Catch	13.4	13.1
Average Per Game	101.5	226.1
TDs Passing	10	10
Sacks By-Yards	23-179	17-126
Fumbles-Lost	26-11	16-4
Penalties-Yards	66-585	65-473

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
NU	65	93	84	92	0	334
Opponents	47	55	79	50	0	231



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Who's Talking?

**Quarterback Lord
says he's learned
'to just roll with
the punches'**

By Mike Babcock

The decision to resume speaking to reporters was his, Jammal Lord said. He had wanted to end his public silence the week before the Texas A&M game, but sports information director Chris Anderson had encouraged him to hold off, to allow both print and electronic media to be on-hand.

So Lord met briefly with reporters following the A&M game — a rush situation as is always the case with road games, and particularly at night — then answered questions in a more relaxed atmosphere following practice, and after lifting weights, on the Tuesday before the Texas game.

"Relaxed" is a relative term, of course. No atmosphere involving reporters could be described as particularly relaxing for Lord. "This is no fun," he said with a laugh.

But interaction with the media is "part of the game," the junior quarterback said. "I have a job to do. You have a job to do. We've just got to make our jobs happy together, move on."

When he got to the "happy together" part, he laughed some more.

"We were fighting each other," he said. He's not fighting now.

To understand Lord's aversion to media attention is to understand the pressure not only of being Nebraska's starting quarterback but also the one that follows Eric Crouch.

Few can understand such pressure. Coach Frank Solich can because the pressure he faces is even greater.

And so can defensive coordinator Craig Bohl, for the same reason.

Quarterbacks coach Turner Gill



Junior Jammal Lord has had to deal with the pressure not only of being Nebraska's starting quarterback but also the one that follows Eric Crouch.

also understands because he was once in the same position, although the circumstances were different. He was a fan favorite before he ever stepped on the field, a high-profile recruit for whom the Cornhuskers had gone head-to-head with Oklahoma.

Lord enjoyed that fan affection when he arrived from Bayonne, N.J.

But when the team began struggling early this season, under his direction, the affection was supplanted by frustration.

Solich, like Tom Osborne before him, is quick to point out that the quarterback gets too much credit when things are going right and too much blame when they're not.

Lord could speak to that, if he

were so inclined. Some who have praised him in victory have been quick to criticize him in defeat. He is trying to deal with that as best he can.

What others think, "I can't say I could care less," he said. "If they're behind you, that's great. If they're not, you can't do anything to change their mind except play football and win games.

"Fans are going to be fans. They're going to say what they want to say. They're going to do what they want to do. I can't control what they say or do. I've got to go out there and play."

Lord's silence began after the loss at Iowa State. That week was probably the low point of the season for him, in part because late in the game sophomore Mike Stuntz replaced him.

"It was real tough," said Lord. "I haven't been benched in a game ever in my life. To sit there and watch what I had done and what Mike Stuntz came in and did, 'Wow, I can't do this anymore.' From there, I started to just roll with the punches. If it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger."

It hasn't killed him. "I'm still walking, still standing and still playing football," he said.

He was temporarily demoted during practice the week of the McNeese State game, and Solich waited until Friday's walk-through to announce that Lord would remain the starter.

Early that week, "I was a little sluggish," said Lord. "It was rough. But I bounced back."

The pressure on him increased after he was ticketed for disturbing the peace following the Missouri game, a relatively minor incident that was magnified by his celebrity status.

After the A&M game, Lord offered a glimpse of what he had to deal with because of that incident. People were calling him at home to "curse at me," he said. They were comparing him to former Cornhusker Lawrence Phillips, "stuff like that, saying I'm a bad guy and I'm an alcoholic."

Because of such verbal venom, from strangers to whom he had done nothing, "the only time I feel happy

is in practice and on game day, in between those white lines," Lord said.

The high point of the season is the most recent victory. As for the low point, "there have been so many," he said. "But that's life. There are ups and downs. That's football.

"You've got to bounce back and move on."

Gill has helped him persevere, providing understanding and support, as a position coach should. After he lost the fumble that was returned 66 yards for a touchdown in the A&M game, Gill met him on the sideline to offer words of encouragement and let him know he was still the quarterback.

"He's been doing it all year," said Lord. "Every time I make a bonehead mistake, Coach Gill takes me aside and says, 'There's a whole bunch of time left. We've got this game.'"

That was the case at A&M, and Lord led the comeback.

"It's always a plus when to have a coach on your side," Lord said.

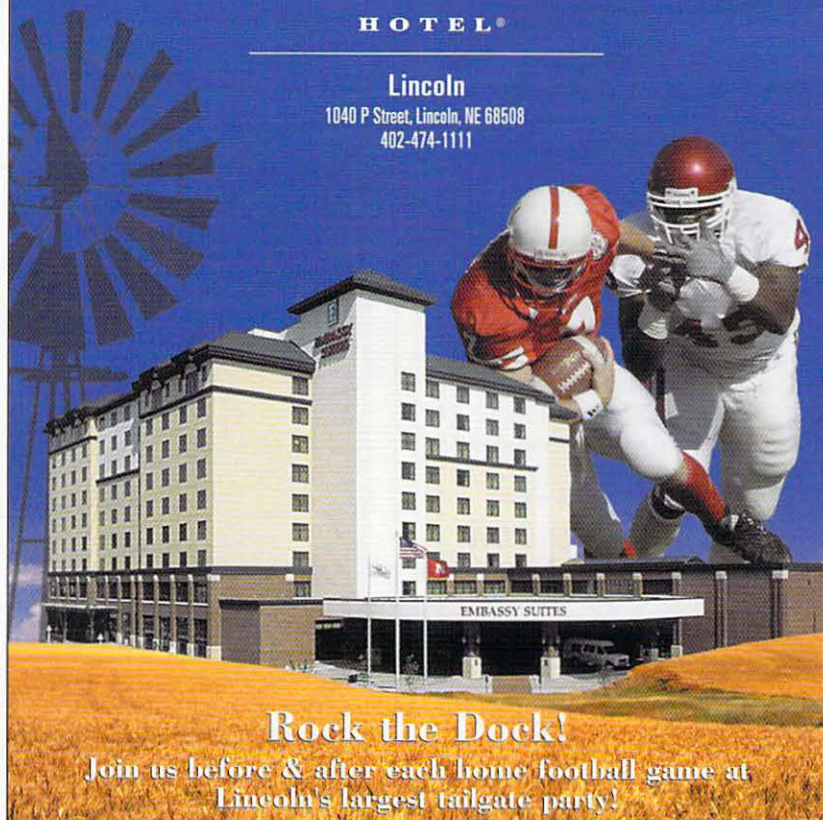
He discussed his hesitancy to talk to reporters with Gill as well as with his mom. "They didn't really change my mind," he said. "They were just saying, 'Well, if you do this, then this will happen. If you don't do this, then that will happen.' But I made the decision on my own. And here we go." ■

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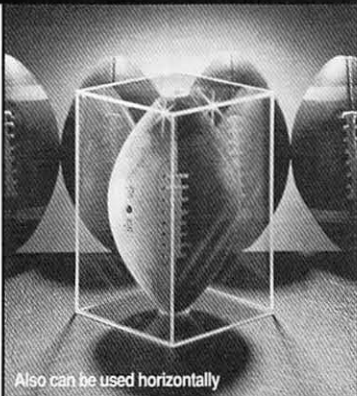
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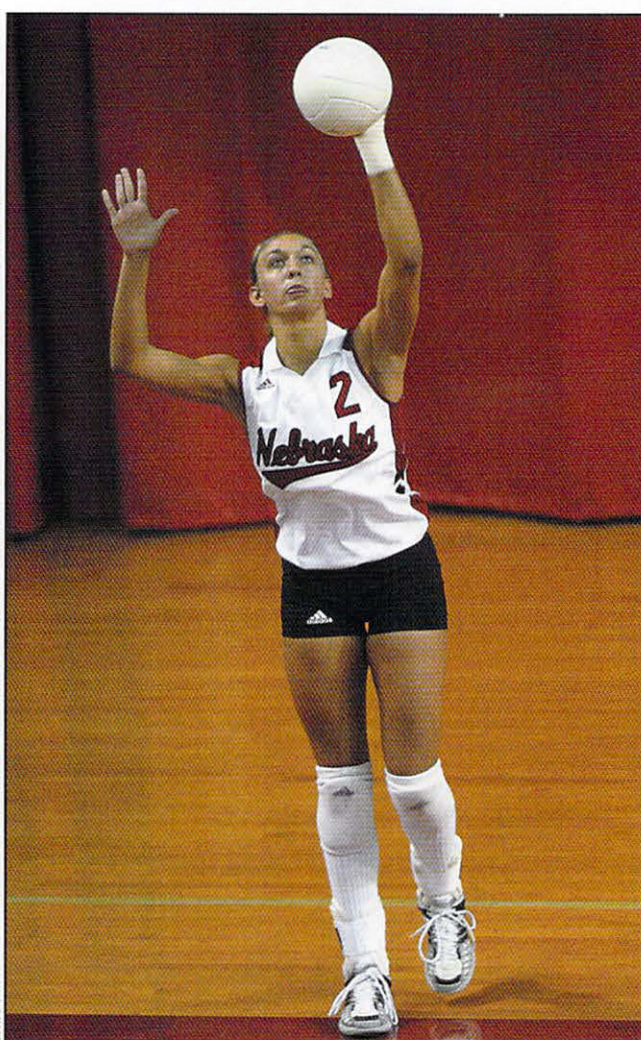
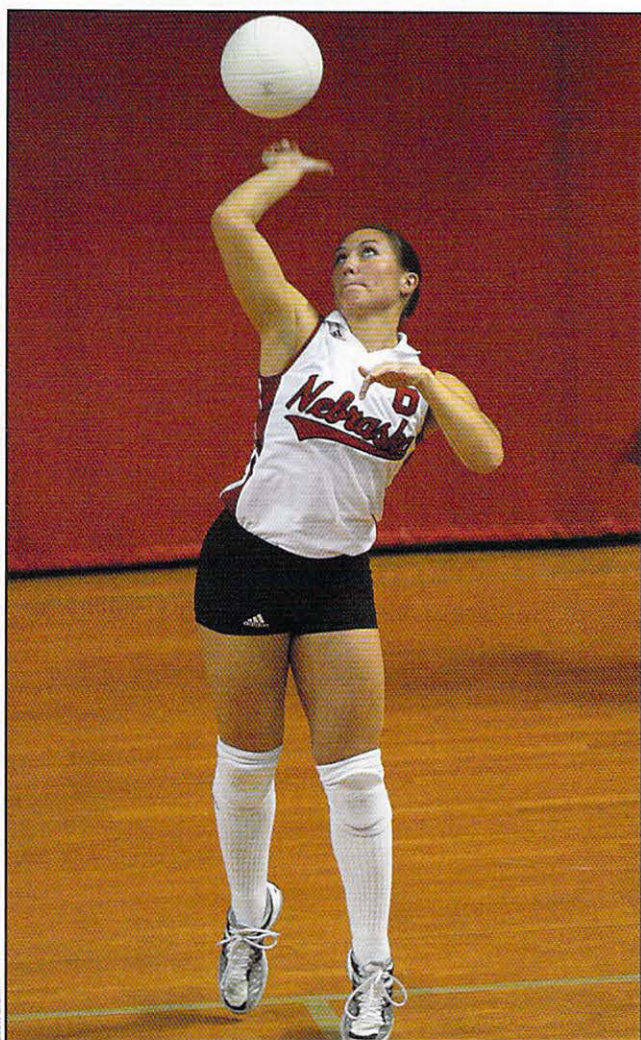
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Junior Jenae Dowling (left) and redshirt freshman Michelle Lynch have cracked the lineup as serving specialists.

Role Players

***Husker reserves
concentrate on
improving, not
looking ahead***

By Todd Henrichs

If everything is going as planned, Michelle Lynch's time on the volleyball court is fleeting.

As a serving specialist, her opportunity comes around once every full rotation, and then her time

in the spotlight depends on Nebraska running points. Any success by the opponent and it's back to the bench for Lynch.

In many ways, it's an odd apprenticeship for a highly recruited setter out of high school who almost certainly will step into the big shoes of running Nebraska's behemoth of a volleyball program next season.

Now in her second year with the Huskers, the redshirt freshman says any chance to get on the court and breathe deep breaths in front of the Coliseum crazies is valuable experience.

"Regardless of whether I'm set-

ting or not, it's the experience of being out there with my teammates that is so important," Lynch said. "I play defense when I go in to serve, and I'll be doing that when I set also. A lot of it's the same, so I think it will make a big difference when it's my chance."

Who knows? One of Nebraska's fleet of role players could end up making the key play that wins the Huskers a national championship this season. But more likely, any experience gained this year could be the difference between a rebuilding season in 2003 and an extension of what Nebraska volleyball has

become over three highly-successful decades.

Nebraska, bidding for its ninth trip to the final four since 1986, will graduate four seniors following the season. Setter Greichaly Cepero, outside hitter Laura Pilakowski and middle blocker Amber Holmquist have All-American certificates and along with captain Lindsay Wischmeier are proud owners of national championship rings.

They could leave as the winningest class in Husker history.

In their place next season could be Lynch, Ally Rebholz, Sara Westling and Jenae Dowling, all players working hard and anxiously awaiting their turn at playing larger roles.

Dowling, who like Lynch has cracked the lineup as a serving specialist this season, said she realizes the importance of concentrating on performing well and improving this year and not looking ahead.

"It's exciting to think about sometimes but I need to continue to get better," Dowling said. "Playing with and against that group in practice is a great opportunity to learn every day."

Dowling, a junior, couldn't hide her excitement when given the chance to play the libero position full-time at Oklahoma the night Greichaly Cepero was suspended earlier this season.

Lynch, too, likely would have gotten her first chance to set in a match but for a freak injury. Lynch, who was bothered by a wrist injury early in the season, broke a finger when a ball bounced off the floor and smacked her hand in practice. She missed several weeks and only recently returned to serving for the Huskers.

With a rare left-handed jump serve, Lynch had 10 aces against only eight errors before the injury. Dowling had 13 aces through 22 matches for the Huskers, who already had secured the program's 28th straight season with 20 victories.

Rebholz, a sophomore, has occasionally spelled starter Anna Schrad on the outside. Westling, a junior from Lincoln who began her career at Pacific, has some experience playing in the middle.

Promising middle attacker Olivia Waldowski is redshirting this year

along with freshman classmates Kelsey Fautsch and Nicole Westerterp. They, too, will be looking to get on the court next season.

"Just getting a chance to play at this level helps to get rid of your nerves," Lynch said. "I don't think I was ready last year, but I feel a lot better prepared now if something happened or if we needed to rest Greicha. I feel a lot more confident."

Lynch has been learning since she first arrived in Lincoln from Jacksonville, Ill. She was ranked among the top five setters in high school her senior year and was part of a highly-ranked NU recruiting class that included Rebholz and

Melissa Elmer.

Nebraska coaches uncovered Dowling while recruiting Elmer. They were high school and club teammates in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Elmer, a starter at Nebraska as a redshirt freshman this season, said she's trying to learn as much as she can before stepping up to a larger role a year from now with several of her teammates.

"It really hasn't been brought up much, but everyone knows it's going to be a year when a lot of people are going to have to step up," Elmer said. "I'm sure a lot of people will be thinking we'll take a step back, but we can't let that happen." ■

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More Players Change Minds

Nebraska has been on both sides of decommitment situations in recent years

By Doug Horwich

Decommitments are a serious problem for most of the nation's football programs in today's recruiting wars, and Nebraska has been on both the winning and losing ends of these situations in recent years.

Because oral commitments are not binding in recruiting, a number of prospects each year end up renegeing on those commitments in favor of other schools prior to National Letter-of-Intent Day, when binding commitments are made in writing.

As recently as last year, Nebraska saw two players defect in defensive tackle Haloti Ngata and wingback



Will Oliver, an offensive lineman from Lindale, Texas, who committed to Texas A&M, has changed his mind and is now strongly considering Nebraska.

Ronald McClendon — both of whom decommitted in favor of other schools. However, the Huskers later benefited from wingback Ronnie Smith's decision to decommit from UNLV in favor of Nebraska.

The Huskers also benefited two years ago when top cornerback prospect Danieal Manning decommitted from Texas A&M and ended up signing with Nebraska.

A similar situation may be taking place this year between the two schools, as top center/guard prospect Will Oliver (6-foot-4, 265 pounds, 5.0 40-yard dash) from

Lindale, Texas, recently decommitted from the Aggies and has said that Nebraska is now his top school.

Oliver became disenchanted with the commitment that he originally made to Texas A&M back in early May and came to feel that the atmosphere there was too conservative for his taste. Interestingly enough, he solidified his decision to decommit after attending the Aggies' game against the Huskers in late October.

In addition to Nebraska, Oliver is looking closely at TCU, where his father went to school, as well as Texas Tech, where his brother is currently a student. Army remains an outside possibility as well.

On the quarterback recruiting front, Nebraska lost out on one of its top prospects, when Bernard Jackson from Corona, Calif., committed to Colorado.

Jackson had enjoyed a great visit to Lincoln, and had also visited Kansas State. Both schools had been recruiting him for months. The Buffaloes were relatively new on the scene for Jackson, but in the end, Jackson enjoyed the atmosphere in Boulder the most and decided that his search was over.

Nebraska is still very much in the hunt for top prospect Tommie Zbikowski (6-1, 190, 4.5) from Buffalo Grove, Ill.

Zbikowski has scheduled a Dec. 20 visit to Lincoln and has Nebraska right at the top of his list, along with Iowa and Notre Dame. Arizona State and Boston College are also in the mix.

Although Zbikowski is tempted to make an early decision, he is determined to take all five of his offi-

Nebraska Commitments for 2003

Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Greg Austin	Cypress, Texas	6-2	275	OL
Andy Birkel	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	180	WR
Steve Craver	Hurst, Texas	6-2	195	DB/LB
Josh Mueller	Columbus (Lakeview), Neb.	6-7	250	TE
*Trevor Neeman	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	225	TE/DE
*Kade Pittman	North Platte, Neb.	6-0	190	RB/DB
Bo Ruud	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-3	210	LB
Brandon Teamer	Omaha (Central), Neb.	6-5	256	DE

*scheduled to enter school in the fall of 2002 as part-time students and receive scholarships in January 2003.

cial visits.

"It's getting more difficult now," his father said. "One of the things that we've been told is that getting hurt is the worst thing that can happen to a high school blue-chip athlete. If you are uncommitted and you get injured, you may have your options pulled away. At the same time, if you make a decision too soon, you may regret it later on."

"I do know that Tommy will not make his decision until he takes all four of his scheduled visits — and possibly a fifth."

While Nebraska covets Zbikowski as a quarterback, the Husker staff has left the door open for him to play safety as well.

"Of the schools that he will visit, only Nebraska is really recruiting him at quarterback," his father said. "However, Nebraska has also made it known that Tommy can play defensive back in Lincoln, if that's what he wants. So the position that Tommy decides to play won't necessarily eliminate anybody."

"I think he'd like to play both ways to tell you the truth. When you play quarterback and you are used to having the ball in your hands on every play, it's hard to let that go. He's really had a tremendous last couple of weeks on the offensive side of the ball. On the other hand, some analysts tell him he has a good chance of developing into an NFL cornerback or safety, and he's listening to some of that, too."

While the Husker staff continues to pursue both Zbikowski and Texas' Joe Jon Finley, they have also turned up the heat on a couple of other top national prospects.

One player who appears to be receiving heightened interest from the Husker staff is Syvelle Newton (6-2, 210, 4.6) from Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville, S.C.

Newton is one of the top prospects in the nation and likes Nebraska, in addition to South Carolina, Florida, UCLA and Clemson. All of his favorites are recruiting him as a quarterback, except for Florida.

The in-state South Carolina Gamecocks are Newton's clear favorite right now, but an impressive visit to Lincoln could change his mind.

Huskers Narrow Recruiting Focus

By Rick Shaw

With less than three months remaining until signing day, Nebraska is narrowing its recruiting focus.

Here is a look at the top 10 prospects that Nebraska is still involved with at this stage of the recruiting process:

1. Tommy Zbikowski, QB, 6-foot-1, 190-pounds (Buffalo Grove, Ill.) — Zbikowski is not only one of Nebraska's top targets, but the speedy quarterback from Illinois is on the wish list of more than 40 schools. Through nine games this fall, Zbikowski had already accumulated 1,100 yards passing and 1,000 yards rushing. His top three schools are Nebraska, Iowa, and Notre Dame, and he will visit all three in December.

2. Kyle Caldwell, DE, 6-4, 255 (Scottsdale, Ariz.) — Caldwell, arguably the top prospect in Arizona, has a Nebraska visit planned for Dec. 13. The pass-rushing specialist had logged 10 sacks through the first eight games of the season. Joining Nebraska on his list of finalists are Oregon, UCLA, Arizona State, and Notre Dame.

3. Thomas Williams, OLB, 6-3, 225 (Vacaville, Calif.) — Williams is a fleet-footed (4.6 seconds in the 40-yard dash) linebacker prospect from the West Coast who has scheduled a Dec. 20 visit to Lincoln. Regarded as a top-10 outside linebacker nationally, Williams is also considering scholarship offers from UCLA, USC, Notre Dame, and Miami.

4. Martin O'Donnell, OT, 6-5, 290 (Downers Grove, Ill.) — Rivals.com rates O'Donnell as the top offensive tackle prospect in the country. The big man from Big Ten country plans visits to Nebraska (Dec. 13), Illinois, Stanford, Iowa, and Penn State.

5. Brett Byford, OG, 6-4, 290 (Hartselle, Ala.) — Byford has had the Huskers leading for his services for several weeks. However, the run-blocking specialist from down south will take visits to South Carolina, Georgia Tech, Oklahoma, and Nebraska (Dec. 20) before making a final decision.

6. Reynaldo Hill, CB, 6-1, 185 (Dodge City, Kan.) — Hill is one of the premier junior college cornerback prospects in the country. Kansas State and Nebraska are running neck and neck in the race to sign this talented athlete.

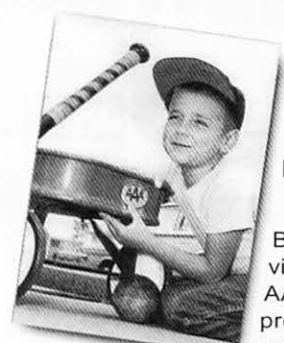
7. Syvelle Newton, QB, 6-2, 210 (Bennettsville, S.C.) — Rivals.com rates Newton as the No. 5 dual-threat quarterback in the country. At one time, it was thought that Newton was a lock to sign with South Carolina. Now, Newton has opened things up a bit, and he says he will visit Lincoln sometime in December.

8. Doug Van Dyke, DE, 6-6, 245 (Marshall, Mich.) — Van Dyke is widely regarded as one of the top 100 high school players in the country. He resides right in the middle of Big Ten country but plans to take an official visit to Nebraska on Dec. 13.

9. Donald DeFrاند, CB, 6-1, 175 (Dodge City, Kan.) — DeFrاند is another speedy cornerback prospect out of Dodge City Community College. Husker coaches will try to persuade him to finish his college career at Nebraska when he makes a November visit to Lincoln.

10. Joe Thomas, OT/TE, 6-7, 270 (Brookfield, Wis.) — Thomas is a tremendous athlete at 270 pounds, and some schools (including Nebraska) project him as a tight end. He visited Lincoln on Oct. 12 for the NU-Missouri game. He plans to take visits to Colorado, Notre Dame, Purdue, and Iowa before making a final decision. ■

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"Whatever school is going to treat me the best is where I am going," he said.

The Huskers have already offered a scholarship, and Newton is interested.

"I like option a little bit," he said. "I can run, too. They (Nebraska) have a good football program."

Another top quarterback prospect who is hearing from the Husker staff is Robert Johnson (6-3, 195, 4.5) from Waco, Texas.

Johnson is an outstanding all-around athlete, and some programs are recruiting him without a specific position in mind. However, Johnson has a strong preference for quarterback and will favor schools who emphasize their desire to play him there.

"I want to play quarterback in college," Johnson said. "Any school that wants to recruit me as an athlete — I don't look at them too much. My main factor is going to be where the school plans to play me."

"I also want to make sure that I can get along in the environment. I kind of like the big cities. I also want to go somewhere that has solid academics."

Johnson currently is looking at Arkansas, Kansas State, Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Baylor. However, the fact that Baylor just fired Coach Kevin Steele probably takes the Bears out of the running.

Johnson is an athletic quarterback who also excels in the passing game.

"My main strength is being able to move around in the pocket and buying myself extra time to throw to my receiver," Johnson said. "I'm probably a better passer than I am a runner. I'm good at both, but I like to throw the ball."

Johnson said Nebraska and Arkansas both run offenses that he thinks would be pretty good for him.

"We run the same offense here as Nebraska does basically," he said. "I can run the option pretty good as well as throw the ball."

In a state rich with talent, a number of top prospects end up going to school out of state, and Johnson is likely to be one of them.

"Distance will not play into my decision," he said. "My parents are encouraging me to go any place that will make me happy." ■

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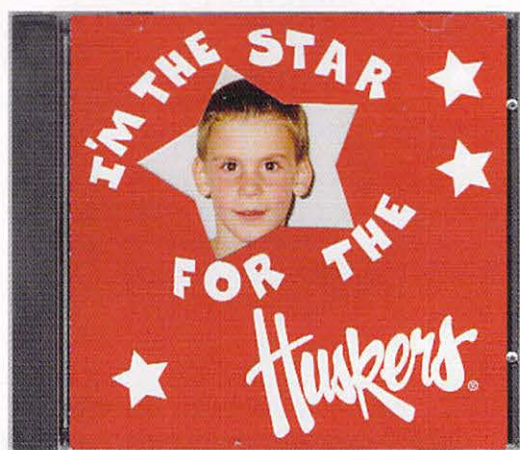
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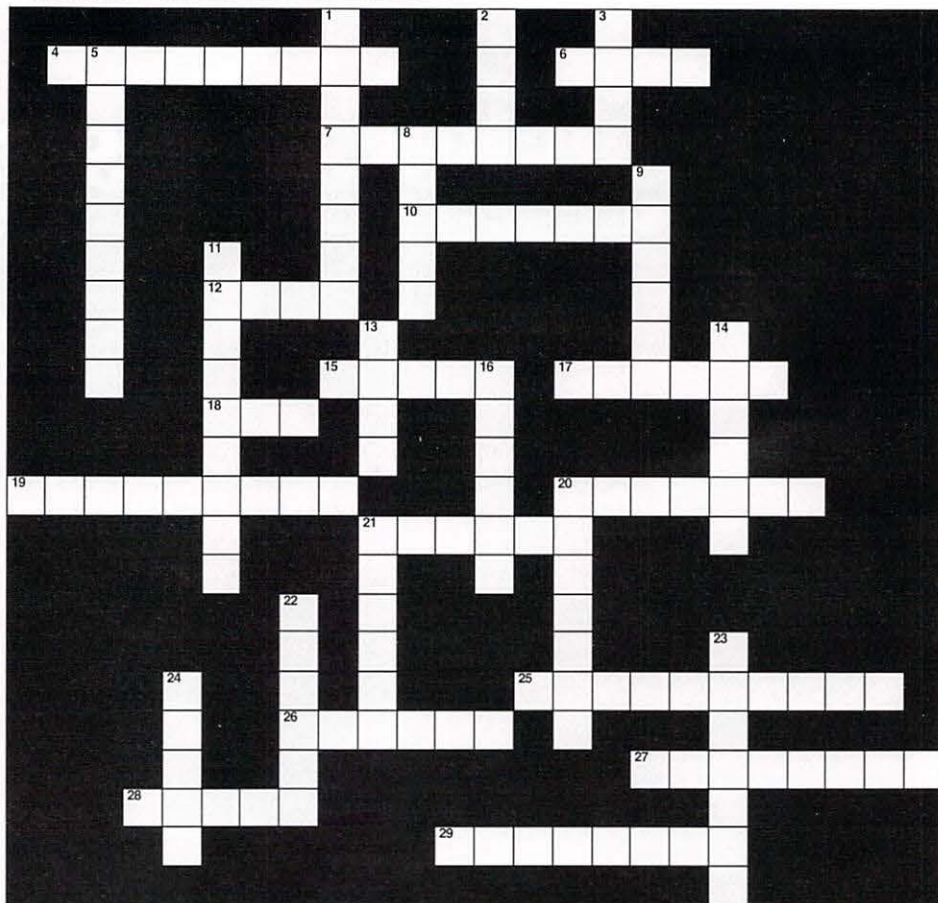
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- 4 NU running back coach
- 6 NU's No. 59 (offense)
- 7 Scored NU's only rushing TD vs. Texas
- 10 NU's director of football operations
- 12 NU cornerback out for season with knee injury
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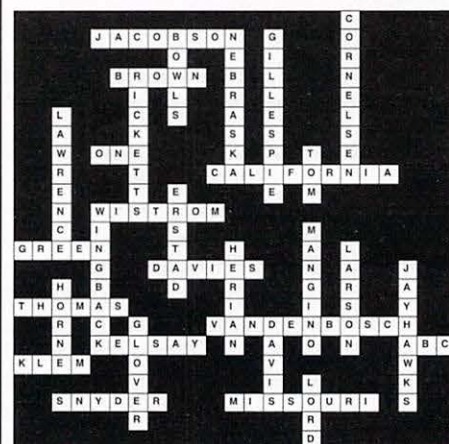
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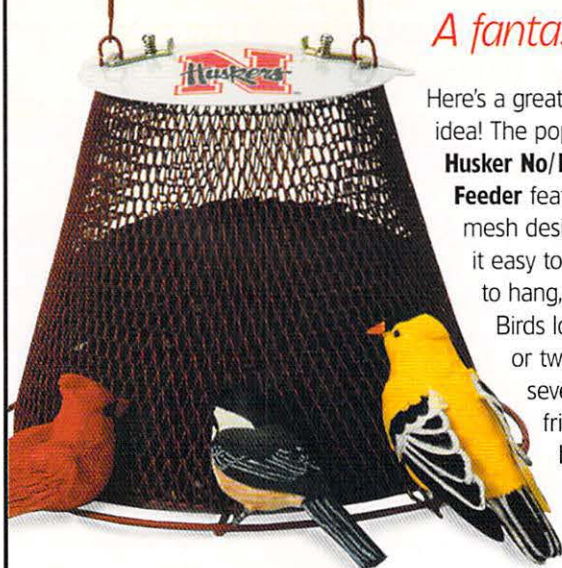


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True Tests Ahead

Nebraska's defensive resiliency and willingness to accept roles will be tested in the final two regular-season games



Mike BABCOCK

RUSH ENDS JUSTIN SMITH and Trevor Johnson were the leading tacklers in Nebraska's 45-7 victory against Kansas. At least, based on the post-game statistics they were.

Those numbers often change after the coaches evaluate videotape.

Still, Smith was credited with seven tackles and Johnson with six. They carried the load at rush end until the game was under control, and the substitutions began in earnest.

The starting rush ends at the beginning of the season, Demoiné Adams and Chris Kelsay, have both been slowed by hamstring injuries. Adams played some, "sparingly," said defensive coordinator Craig Bohl. But Kelsay was forced to watch in street clothes, as he has in recent weeks.

He hasn't been able to play since early in the McNeese State game.

"We've been thin (at rush end) for quite some time," Bohl said.

The situation is such that redshirted freshman Titus Adams, a defensive tackle, has been spending some practice time at rush end the last couple of weeks.

Bohl calls it "double training," and it's "difficult," he said. Titus Adams is still practicing at defensive tackle, but "we've separated his work to get him more work at rush end."

The 6-foot-3 Adams is listed at 285 pounds. But he's probably pushing 300 pounds, according to Bohl, which means he's "not a prototype rush end."

But Adams has "good movement. He's got good athleticism, good quickness," Bohl said. "We needed somebody to go there. We just haven't been in a position where we've had to play him."

The Cornhuskers were in that position against Kansas. And Adams responded.

"He's doing it," said Bohl. "That's just kind of our guys. Whatever it takes, they're doing. They don't say, 'Well, Coach, I can't do this or that.' They do the best they can."

And that was good enough to get the job done against the Jayhawks.

Nebraska's defense has been nothing if not resilient this season. The players "have not gone in the tank," Bohl said. "We've had games where we've had the ball bounce against us."

And Texas took them to task with the passing of Chris Simms and the receiving of Roy Williams, who will be earning a good living in the NFL in the not-too-distant future.

Cornhusker cornerback Fabian Washington, a true

freshman, was among those who were matched against Williams, without much success. And he should benefit from the experience.

"When you go out and play against great people, you remember that," said Bohl. "There's a whole lot of difference doing practice repetitions and lining up against Roy Williams or (Rashaun) Woods."

Woods had a big day receiving for Oklahoma State in the Cowboys' 24-21 victory.

"It just seems like we've had one (outstanding receiver) after another," Bohl said.

Washington hasn't shown any lingering effects from either of those games, playing well against Kansas. He was credited with two tackles. He broke up a pass and intercepted another, his fourth of the season. In short, Washington has represented the resiliency to which Bohl referred.

Cornerback is a "position where you've got to have a lot of confidence, and he certainly does," Bohl said. "So it was great to see him make some plays today."

Nebraska's defensive resiliency and willingness to accept roles will be tested in the final two regular-season games, now that the Cornhuskers' hopes of playing in the Big 12 title game are gone.

Colorado's overtime victory against Missouri eliminated Nebraska from contention.

Even though the Cornhuskers could still finish in a tie atop the North Division by winning their remaining games against Kansas State and Colorado, assuming Colorado were to lose to

Iowa State, they can't play in Houston on Dec. 7 because of a head-to-head tiebreaker with the Cyclones.

Despite being humiliated by Kansas State, Iowa State could tie for the North Division title with a victory against Colorado and Nebraska victories against Kansas State and Colorado. But if Colorado beats Iowa State, the Buffaloes win the Big 12 north regardless of what happens in Lincoln.

Nebraska became bowl-eligible with the Kansas victory. And the Cornhuskers can still keep their string of nine-victory seasons in tact. If they win out, they'll enhance their bowl situation.

Getting Kelsay back and Demoiné Adams healthy would certainly help.

But "we've got to prepare and play the guys we've got," said Bohl.

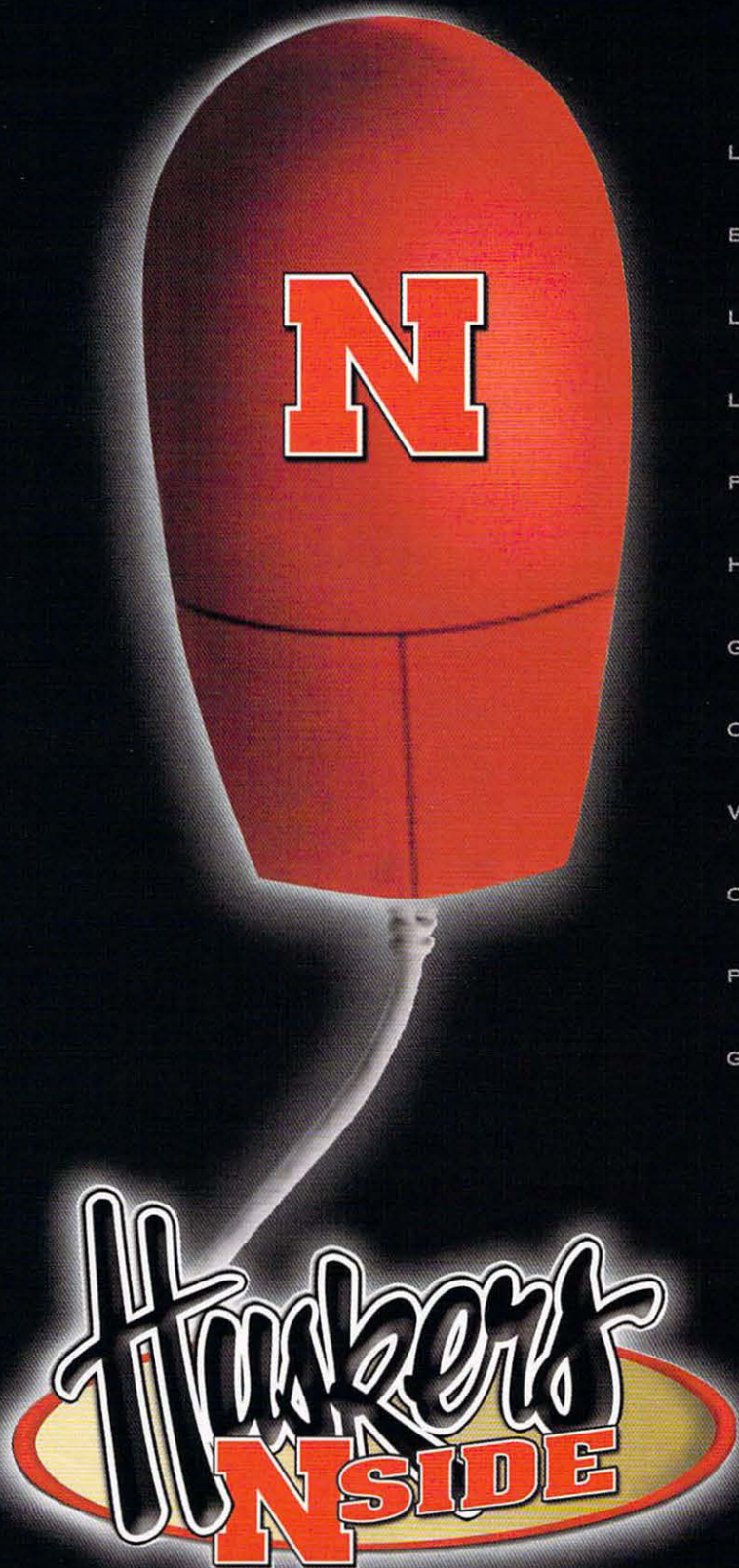
"We've just got to keep on trucking along." ■



Nose tackle Titus Adams is doubling as a rush end.

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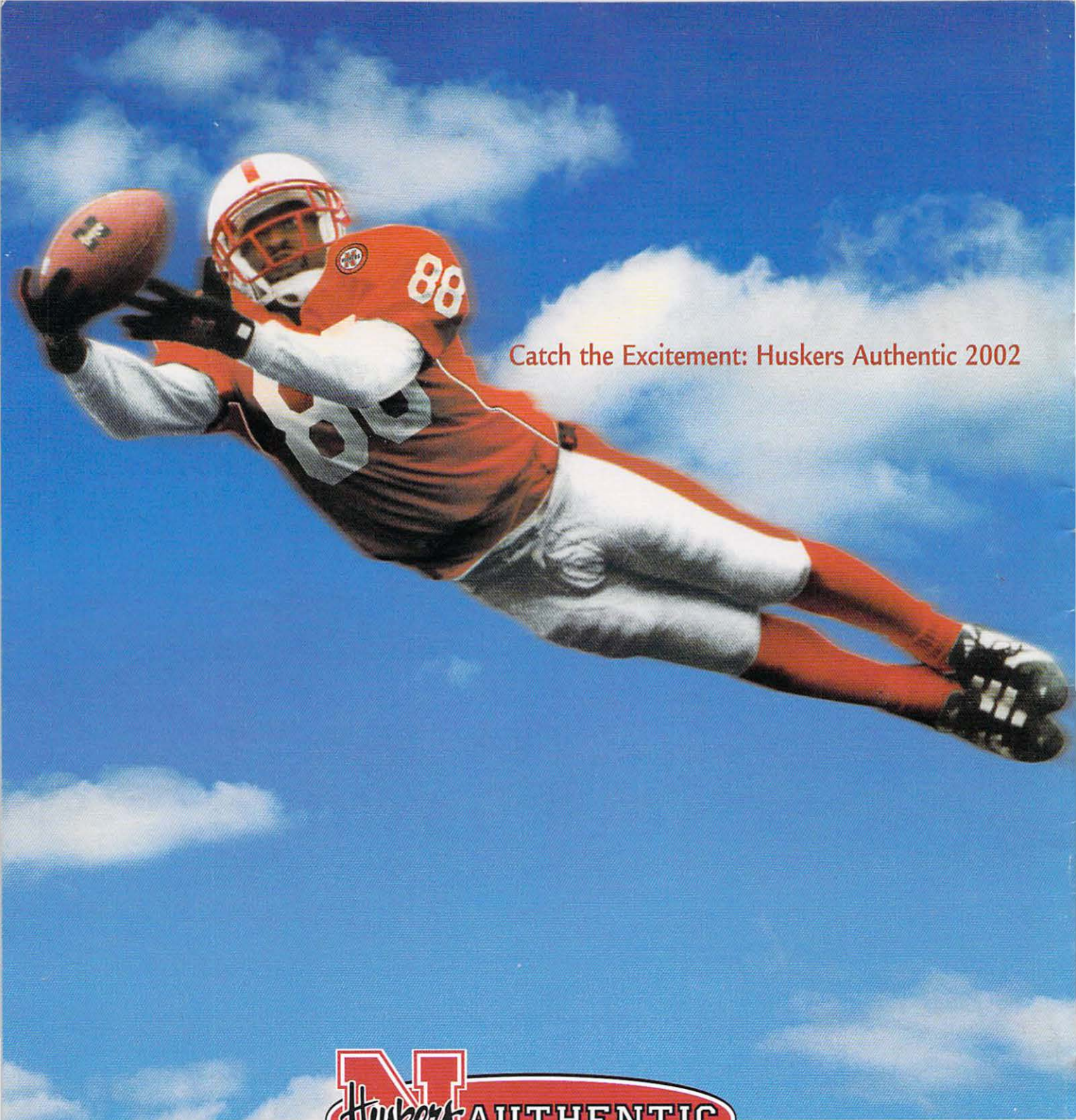
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